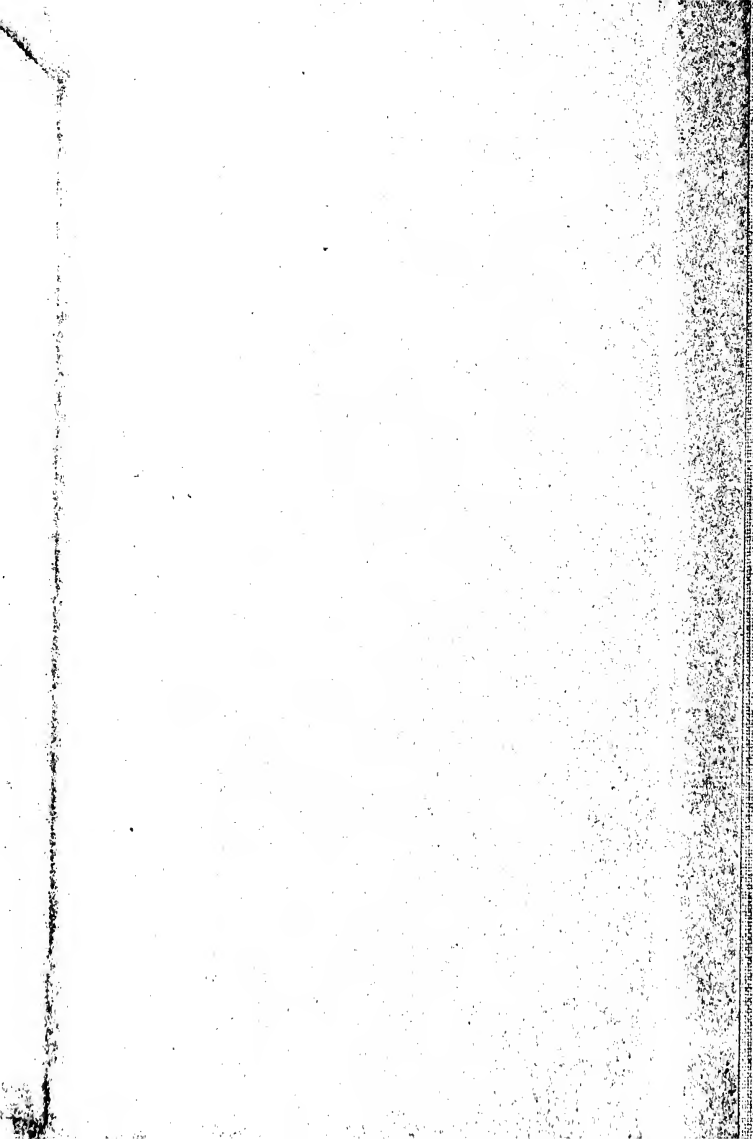


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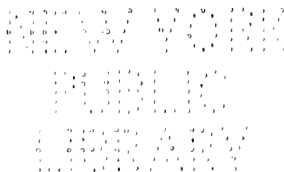
# HOLY CROSS

A HISTORY OF THE INVENTION, PRESERVATION, AND DISAPPEARANCE  
OF THE WOOD KNOWN AS

## THE TRUE CROSS

BY

W. C. PRIME, LL.D.



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EDWARD O. JENKINS,  
*PRINTER AND STEREOTYPYER,*  
26 NORTH WILLIAM ST., N.Y.

ROBERT RUTTER,  
*BINDER,*  
84 BEEKMAN STREET, N.Y.

Cross of shame, yet tree of glory  
Round thee winds the one great story  
Of this ever changing earth :  
Center of the true and holy,  
Grave of human sin and folly,  
Womb of Nature's second birth !

REV. HORATIUS BONAR, 1866.

When I survey the wondrous Cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,  
And pour contempt on all my pride.

REV. ISAAC WATTS, 1709.

The balm of life, the cure of woe,  
The measure and the pledge of love ;  
The sinner's refuge here below,  
The angel's theme in heaven above.

REV. THOMAS KELLY, 1820.

In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Towering o'er the wrecks of time ;  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.

SIR JOHN BOWRING, 1825.

Blest Cross ! Blest Sepulchre ! blest rather be  
The man that there was put to shame for me.

JOHN BUNYAN, 1660.

1807 1100  
2100  
2200  
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## P R E F A C E .

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THIS book is an attempt to sketch the history of the wood which was known for many centuries as the True Cross, and to indicate the various influences, direct and indirect, which proceeded from it, and affected the religious and political destinies of the world. It is but a sketch, for the history fully written out would be a history of Europe and Asia during the period from A.D. 326 to our own times.

I have tried to compile from extant authorities the story of the finding of the wood by the Empress Helena, the remarkable power it exerted on men and nations, its adventures while in Christian hands, and its final disappearance.

Brief and very partial and prejudiced accounts have been heretofore written, by those who believed in the verity of the wood as the cross on which the Lord died, and equally partial and prejudiced accounts have been written by those who regarded its story as one of imposture and deceit from beginning to end.

Very Cross or False Cross, whichever it was, I am confident no intelligent person will doubt, after reading what I have gathered, that this wood well deserves to be the subject of an abler historian, and that its history is worthy of being written in many volumes. It was for so many

centuries the heart of the Christian world, and it had such mighty influence on Church and on kingdoms, that the omission of it in writing the history of European civilization, and of European governments, would be like omitting the mention of steam in describing the engines which drive great vessels with precious loads of passengers and goods, across oceans. Its direct influence, in various ways, is visible to all who will study the history, but its invisible influence in moulding the minds of kings and people, clergy and laity, can only here and there be guessed at. Enough is known to show that this influence controlled and guided the mind of Europe, and is of vast account in studying the history of literature and art.

Upon the question of the verity of the wood as the True Cross, I have endeavored to give, with impartiality, the arguments on both sides, confessing my own want of faith.

On the question of the locality of the place of the crucifixion as marked by the Empress Helena, I have given my own opinions, the result of careful examination of the topography of Jerusalem in different visits, and careful study of all known authorities. Throughout, I have tried to relate the facts of history, and where any statement depends on tradition, have so given it. Instead of encumbering the pages with references to authorities in footnotes, I refer the reader, who desires to pursue the subject, to the following, which, besides many others, have been more or less used in preparing this account.

Eusebius. *Vita Constantini*. Lips., 1830.

Willermi Tyrensis Archiep. *Hist.*, and the various chronicles, etc., contained in the *Gesta Dei per Francos*, etc., Hanov., 1611.

Geoffrey de Vinsauf; Itinerary of Richard, etc.; in *Chronicles of the Crusades*. London, 1848.

Socrates; Theodoret; Sozomen; Ambrose (de ob. Theod. & Patrol.); Rufinus; Sulpicius Severus; Beda (Ven.); Chrysostom; Gregory of Tours; Cyril of Alexandria; Paulinus of Nola, and other historians and fathers of the Church, and Latin and Greek authors specially referred to in the text.

Bollandus; *Acta Sanctorum*. Antwerp, et al. loc., 1643, etc.

Bohadini F. Sjeddadi; *Vita et Res gestae Sultani Almalichi Alnasiri Saladini*, etc. Arab. et Lat. Lugd. Bat., 1732.

Abulfeda; *Excerpta*, etc., in same volume.

Angelo Rocca Camerte; *De particula ex pretioso et viv. ligno sac. crucis*, etc. Rome, 1609.

Lipsius; *De Cruce*. Antwerp, 1594.

Bosius; *de cruce triumphale*, etc. Antwerp, 1619.

Mone. *Lateinische Hymnen*, etc., 3 vols. Freiburg in Breisgau, 1854. (In vol. I, many hymns, etc., relating to the subject).

Neale, Rev. J. M. *Mediæval Hymns and Sequences*, translated. London, 1851.

Wilkinson. *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*. 5 vols. London, 1847. (See vol. 5, on the Tau).

*Notes and Queries*. London, 1849-1876; *passim*. (Many interesting and valuable notes on the subject have from time to time appeared in N. and Q. And besides these authorities, a large number of modern historians and travelers have contributed to the literature of the subject).





# H O L Y   C R O S S .

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## I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

THIS monograph is but an outline sketch of a history which, if written out, would be the history of many nations, many wars, and, what never will be written except in the books to be opened when all our books are gone—the history of the lives, the passions, the sins and sorrows, the penitence and pardon of many human souls. It is only the story of two or three pieces of old wood ; pieces of wood which the blind, unquestioning faith of men made the wood of the cross on which their Saviour died.

The ardor of religious controversy leads many now to look on that faith with contempt. No faith is contemptible. Faith is worthy of more or less respect, even if it seem to be faith in a falsehood. For faith is a power. Faith is what leads to work and

produces results. Faith in a lie will sometimes accomplish more than reason in support of truth. Faith must not be despised. I have thought that the history of those pieces of wood in which men had such faith that they moved empires, might do some good in these days when blind faith is ridiculed, and men are as intolerant of other men's faith as they ever were in any age.

If it will help the reader to dismiss prejudice from his mind in reading the story, I will, at the outset, say that I have never found reasonable grounds sufficient for the faith whose results I describe, and therefore I do not believe that these fragments of wood were the very cross; but I am bound to add that there is nothing to prove the contrary. They may have been so. Whether they were or were not the wood men believed them to be, is not a question in this story, and has no importance in reference to its object, which is not so much to give the history itself, as to furnish an illustration of the effect of faith in anything on the history of man and of the world. The wood of the cross, which faith made an object of passionate affection and reverence to all the Christian world, was one of the most important objects in history. A very foolish fashion among

some writers has led them to speak of it with contemptuous expressions. Such writers are, of course, ignorant of the facts of history. Travelers in the Holy Land, following the fashion, are given to ridiculing the great chasm in the rocks known as the Chapel of the finding of the Cross. But this is one of the least questionable of all the sacred localities. No reader of history can doubt that from this chasm the Empress Helena took those pieces of wood which subsequently became to the faith of Europe the true cross. Whether she was a deceiver, or was deceived, or whether, indeed, the wood was the veritable wood of the cross, the event of its finding is one of the most profoundly interesting and important in the history of man. Its immediate effect on the Roman Empire, its later effect on Europe, the wars to which it led, the changes it produced in the political history of Asia and Europe, the immeasurable influence exerted by those fragments of wood on the individual hearts and lives of hundreds of millions of the human race, all are of such magnitude as to rebuke, in thoughtful minds, the flippant style in which some modern writers have treated the event, the place of discovery, and the wood itself. As a historical monument, no pyramid of Egypt, no Acropolis, no mound

over the slain on any battle-field, can be compared with that cavernous chapel. It is my intent to give, with as much impartiality as I can, the history, relating the facts so far as known, and the traditions so far as I have found them, which go to show the authenticity or the falsehood of the wood. The reader will thus be enabled, if he cares to do so, to form his own judgment of the reasons for the faith of Europe, or to leave that portion of the subject, as I have myself left it, without definite conclusion, regarding it as of very small importance compared with the history of the wood and its influence on the destinies of Christian nations.

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## II.

### CROSSES AND CRUCIFIXION.

THE cross was an instrument of punishment from an early date. How early we do not know. The Greek word *σταυρος*, *stauros*, translated cross in the sacred writings, originally signified a stake. Thucydides uses it, and the verb *stauroo*, as well as the noun *stauroma*, and other derivatives, in the sense of stakes

driven for a palisade. It is probable that the custom of crucifixion, as we understand it, came from the prior custom of impaling on a stake, and thus the Greek word took the signification given to it in later times.

The Latin word *crux*, from which the English word cross is derived, had among the Latins the same general meaning which we give to the word "cross"—primarily, the instrument of painful punishment; secondarily, trials and pains in life, or even a miserable death. Plautus uses the word in describing death by drowning, and also employs the words *crucior* and *cruciabilitas*, in the sense of torment.

Terence even uses the word *crux* as a name of reproach, meaning "wretch," "scoundrel."

Seneca (Epist. 101) speaks at length of the torments of death by crucifixion, using the expressions *patibulo pendere* and *acutam crucem*. The *Patibulum* was constructed with two upright beams and a crossbeam connecting them at the top.



The *Furca* was in the shape of the letter Y. It is probable that in most cases the furca consisted of a single piece of wood; the trunk of a tree cut off with two diverging branches.



These instruments are commonly distinguished by their names; but the Latin writers used *crux* and the cognate verbs, nouns, and adjectives, as the Greeks used *stauros*, when describing death on the stake, the *furca*, the *patibulum*, or any form of cross.

Cicero and other Romans speak of the cross as *infelix lignum*. In one of his orations, Cicero expressed the infamy which always attached to the punishment of the cross (as in our day to the gallows), by the indignant exclamation: "Let the very name of the cross be put far away, not alone from the bodies, but from the eyes, the ears, the thoughts of Roman citizens."

Crucifixion was a punishment accorded by the Romans to slaves and those convicted of the most heinous crimes. It was also a common mode of inflicting vengeance on conquered enemies. It is a remarkable fact that one of the most terrible instances of this punishment recorded in history is the crucifixion by Titus of the Hebrews on the conquest of Jerusalem. Josephus says the number was so great that wood was lacking for crosses. It has not escaped the notice of many writers that the generation had not passed away of those who had made the Roman hall of justice ring to the cry, "Crucify

him ! crucify him ! ” and had accepted for themselves and their children the responsibility of blood thus visited on them.

It does not appear clear that crucifixion was known to the ancient Hebrews as a mode of punishment, though it was practiced by the Egyptians and Assyrians, who were their neighbors. It became well known to them, however, under the Roman power, Varus once crucifying two thousand Jews at one time, for sedition. The Sanhedrim condemned our Lord for blasphemy only ; but when He was brought before Pilate, the charge of sedition was urged, and the punishment of the cross demanded and ordered on that charge.

The forms of the cross were various, as appears from what has been already said. The Greek words *stauros* and *skolops* and the Latin *crux* were applied to all these forms.

The Simple Cross was a stake or single piece of wood. A growing tree was a common instrument of crucifixion, to which the condemned was bound by cords, either with the arms extended on branches or drawn backward around the trunk. Tertullian speaks of trees as crosses on which Tiberius punished certain priests. We have already seen that a person impaled on a stake was said to be crucified.

The Compound Cross was of three forms (excluding the patibulum and the furca). These three are now commonly known as :

1. The Greek Cross (*Dccussata*), also called St. Andrew's Cross.



2. The Latin Cross (*Immissa*).



3. The Tau Cross (*Crux Ansata*).



Some writers have given to the *crux ansata* the name St. Anthony's Cross, because of a sign found figured on the robes of St. Anthony in old Greek art. This sign, however, was only the letter T, and had not the same form as the *crux ansata*. It is found on the cope or on the left shoulder of figures of St. Anthony and his monks. It has been suggested by Mrs. Jameson and others that T is the initial letter of the Greek word *Theos*, and was used here in allusion to the hundred and forty and four thousand spoken of in Revelation xiv. 1, "having his Father's name



written in their foreheads." Mrs. Jameson cites an ancient stained glass in France, in which is represented one man marking T on the forehead of another, and over them the words *Signum Tau*.

It is quite possible that this sign, if borne by St. Anthony, who lived and died in Egypt in the fourth century, or found on early representations of him or his monks, may have had reference to the hieroglyphic "crux ansata" found on Egyptian monuments, and adopted by early Christians in the Thebaid, who mistook it for the sign of the cross. We shall refer to this again. So, too, it may have referred to that passage in Ezekiel ix. 4, where the man with the ink horn was told to go through the city and "set a mark" on the foreheads of those who mourned for the sins of the people. The expression here translated "set a mark" is literally "mark with a Tau." The same expression occurs in 1 Samuel xxi. 13, where David, feigning madness, "scrabbled on the doors of the gate," literally "marked the Tau" on the doors, and thus saved himself from the enmity of the Philistine king.

Tau was the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and in its ancient form was a cross. Origen says that in his time some Hebrews explained the passage in

Ezekiel by supposing this mark of the last letter to indicate completeness, the end of the alphabet of sorrow for sin; others supposed it to be the indication of obedience to law, because the letter was the first in the word *Thorah*, the law; but that the Christians, arguing from the ancient form of the Hebrew letter, regarded it as the sign of the cross, and a prophetic use of that sign.

The sign, in form of the Latin cross, seldom found in use before Constantine, except in Egypt, may have been adopted with reference to these Old Testament passages, and perhaps to the passage in the Revelation as well, and it may be that in these two instances of setting a mark on the forehead originated the custom among Christians of marking with the sign of the cross on tombs, on their persons, and in ceremonial observances.

The Crux Ansata, often held in the hand of Osiris, is common among Egyptian antiquities, in steatite, pottery, and other materials, and as a hieroglyph in legends. It has been variously called the Key of the Nile and the sign of Venus. It is now understood to be the sign of Life, and is of such frequent occurrence in hieroglyphic sculptures that it is not strange that it attracted the eyes of the early Christians in

Egypt, who mistook it for the sign of the cross, and adopted it as such. Wilkinson found it used as a prefix to early Christian inscriptions in the Great Oasis.

Mr. Layard, finding it among the antiquities of Assyria, supposes it to be a symbol of Divinity.

A similar sign is found among the ancient remains of Central America.

The subject has importance here only for the idea adopted by some that this peculiar symbol indicates relations between distant nations, and also a pre-Christian significance to the sign of the cross.

This is not a scientific treatise; otherwise, it might be interesting to review the discussion of this subject. It is proper, however, to note that the sign which has been called the *Crux Ansata*, as found in various localities, is so varied in form that it is by no means apparent that it is always the same sign. It is one of those marks which may naturally grow into use when a people begin to write or make pictures.

A sign made by two lines crossing each other at right angles, with the ends of the lines again deflected at right angles, is one of the oldest and most frequent decorations found on Cypriote pottery, which is,



perhaps, the oldest representation of Phenician and Asiatic art which we now possess. On many vases in the Cesnola Collection (in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York) it is made exceedingly prominent. On one vase, which we think may be correctly assigned to a period much older than B.C. 1000, it appears in a remarkable picture. It is in the wide-opened mouth of a fish, and from without an arrow points toward it. Over the fish stands a stork, piercing the fish with his long bill. If the arrow signifies death, we may conjecture that on this old specimen the peculiar symbol represents life, and thus read the picture as the simple story of life from death; the fish destroying life that he may live, the stork destroying the fish that he may live.

Whatever be the meaning of the symbol, we dismiss it here with the single remark that crossed lines are among the first forms of drawing in decoration by all barbarous races, and that the *Crux Ansata* is the simplest form, which a child or a savage might produce in drawing a picture of a man. Simple forms of decoration in lines and circles, and some apparently complex forms resulting from them in checks, meander patterns, beads, and drops, are common to many nations, and remain popular because of their

actual simplicity. The Chinese have for some centuries down to the present day, used as an ornamental decoration on porcelain, the figure which we have given above as common to the ancient Phenicians, and it is also found in early Christian work in Italy. We have it, on Chinese porcelain, with a second extension of the ends of the arms, parallel to the chief arms.

The Greek cross, being in the form of the letter X, the Greek initial letter of the name of the Lord, was early adopted by Christians as a sign of the faith. They engraved it on gems and placed it on the tombs of the dead. In time they added to it the next letter in the name, the Greek Rho, which is the Latin P and this form, **Xp.** in monogram went upon the imperial standard of Rome in the place of the eagle.



The Latin cross was the form used in the crucifixion of our Lord. On this all the authorities are agreed, and the fact that the inscription of Pilate was placed above his head is alone sufficient evidence of it. This cross consisted of either two or three pieces of wood, the upright, the crossbeam, and a third piece projecting higher or lower from the ground, to

give support in one case to the body, and in the other to the feet, lest the weight should tear the hands from the nails. This form of the cross did not often appear on sculptures until the time of Constantine, and, as has been remarked, when found, is more frequently a copy of the Egyptian sign of life, or of the old Hebrew Tau. In the days of Constantine its use became more common; it appears on coins, and the monogram of **Xp.** was often after this constructed with the Latin cross.



Crucifixion, the fastening to the cross, was either by cords binding the limbs to the cross, or by nails driven through the hands and feet. In either case death ensued from exhaustion and suffering. The agony was often long and lingering. Victims sometimes lived for several days on crosses. Bearing in mind the custom of binding the condemned to the cross by cords, we see peculiar significance in the words of Christ to Peter, "When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Doubtless when bound to the wood and carried to the place of his suffering, Peter remembered these words, and perhaps the expression which succeeded

them, "Follow me;" and he may have murmured, "Yea, Lord, I follow Thee—but I am not worthy to die as Thou didst die." For we know that he begged the executioners to plant his cross with his head downwards, and thus died.

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### III.

#### CONSTANTINE AND HELENA.

A WRITER who has contributed to one of the most valuable dictionaries of our time a learned article on the word Cross, dismisses a brief notice of the wood, whose history we now propose to sketch, with a reference to a few authorities for such readers as are interested in pursuing a history of "ridiculous imposture." Surely the history of Mohammed is not ridiculous, though he were an impostor. And it is equally sure that there is nothing ridiculous about that wood which so inflamed the heart of all Christendom, century after century, as to hurl the forces of Europe again and again against the forces of Mohammedanism until the latter triumphed. The cross was the chief object of European affection; the cross was the exciting object of Christian war;

the cross was the sign, taking which, the crusaders went to rescue cross and sepulchre from the hands of the infidels. The faith of men in the verity of that wood, as the wood of Christ's suffering, shaped the history of Europe, changed the whole course of events in Christendom.

It was nothing but two or three pieces of wood. But whether cross of Christ, or cross of thief, or timber of some old house in Jerusalem, around no other object, sensible or senseless, have the hearts of men throbbed as around it. For nearly a thousand years that wood was the center of the world. Roman Emperors, Gothic invaders, the descendants of Goth and Roman, Kings of France and Germany and England, and subjects of every race and nation in the civilized world, regarded that block of wood as the very door-post of Heaven. The young made vows of faith, swearing by its sanctity. The old turned their old eyes toward Jerusalem before they died, and sometimes thought—whether it was the light glimmering through tears, or the bursting on their sight of the glories that are sometimes revealed to the dying—that they beheld the radiant light of the thorn-crowned Head. Pilgrims of many generations knelt before it and laid their sins down on the



stones of the Holy City. Thousands died for it to rescue it from the hands of the infidel ; and when they had once rescued it, knights and kings fought to preserve it, and dying, were buried in stately rank around its foot. Monarchs resigned their thrones for the sake of defending or rescuing it, and when at last it vanished from the eyes of the world, another era began, as if a sun had disappeared, and a profound darkness had taken its place. Let no one think this any exaggeration of the importance of this wood in the history of the world. It can not be exaggerated.

The conquests of Christianity over Paganism within the three centuries immediately following the crucifixion were rapid. In three hundred years the religion of the Cross conquered the Roman world. History shows no such instance of propagandism as this. From a despised and hated sect the Christians grew to be the rulers of the earth. From that small company which assembled around the table of the last supper, they within three centuries numbered among themselves the hosts of Rome ; and at length the followers of the despised man of Nazareth, who kept faithful vigil at Jerusalem, where a Roman governor had done Him to death at the cry of a Jewish mob, beheld the Emperor of Rome, not indeed in

person, but in proxy by his aged and pious mother, on foot and in sackcloth, entering the gate of the city and seeking with pilgrim footsteps "the place where they laid Him."

The question of the verity of the wood of the cross will be seen to depend very much on an estimate of the character of the Emperor Constantine. The account is familiar, which Constantine himself gave to Eusebius, of his vision of the cross in the heavens, and his subsequent dream of the presence of Christ bearing the sacred symbol. Was this or was it not a pure invention of the wily Emperor to secure the Christian influence? The Christians were a small minority of the people of the Roman world. The pagan religion had not wholly lost its hold on the nations of Western Europe, and the East, under Licinius, had not seriously felt the new faith as a power among men. But the pagan faith was dying. Men were in general infidels. Christianity was the only religion in the Roman Empire which had life, vigor, and the grand element of faith in its professors.

The Empress Helena, widow of Constantius Chlorus and mother of Constantine, was an Englishwoman and a Christian. How far his mother's faith influenced him we have no means of knowing. The cross

had not been, up to this date, used as the public symbol of Christian faith. The Greek cross **X** had been in use on secret tombs, and probably on personal ornaments. The Latin cross had also been used occasionally, but not so frequently as the Greek.

Constantine, either on account of his vision or for some other reason unknown to us, possibly from a sincere conversion to the religion of the Nazarene, adopted the cross as the symbol of his religion and the empire. Considered as a naked historical fact, it was a wonderfully bold act. We have already seen that crucifixion had been detestable to Romans, and the cross as much an emblem of disgrace in their view as a gallows would be in ours to-day. Let us imagine a European or American government adopting the gallows as a standard, and commanding its armies to march to victory under it. What would be the probable effect? Yet what was the effect in this instance? The army marched on from victory to victory, until in the year 324 the Western forces, carrying the standard of the Cross, met the Eastern forces, carrying the old banners of Rome, and Constantine, defeating Licinius in a battle in which two hundred thousand men were engaged, near Hadrianople, fol-

lowed up his victory to the capture of Byzantium, annihilated the Eastern army on the opposite shore of the Bosphorus, and planted the standard of the Cross where Europe and Asia alike could see it, to be thenceforward the object of their veneration.

We shall see in a moment what this Christian symbol, the *Labarum* of history, has to do with the wood which is our subject. Constantine was not satisfied with the glory he had attained, even adding his conquests over the Goths and the unity of the Roman Empire. He had conquered by the cross. What was this cross? Gauls, Romans and Goths, Persians and Scythians, all might well ask what was this sign which the emperor had adopted, and under which he had been invincible. He had made the world honor the sign, borne in glittering gold at the head of his armies; he had made it to blaze in jewels on his crown, and had placed it on his coins, so that all who handled Roman money should be familiar with it. After all this he seems to have determined to show them the original cross itself.

Whether the pilgrimage of his pious mother to the Holy Land originated in her own desire, or in grief for the death of her grandson Crispus, or was suggested by her son, does not clearly appear. What-

ever the origin, however, no one doubts the sincerity and devotion with which the empress accomplished it. Furnished with abundant means and credentials as the representative of the emperor himself, Helena went to Jerusalem in the year 325, and there represented him in the works which she accomplished. Helena was no impostor or helper of imposture. She was a pious old Englishwoman, and may have been imposed on, but I do not know that any one has thought so ill of her as to suggest that there was any hypocrisy in her.

Besides, she had learned men for her advisers—men whom the world has never accused of wrong or deceit. The most we know of her work is from Eusebius, who was in Palestine and in Jerusalem at about this time. It is also an element in the argument for or against the sincerity of her acts and the acts of her advisers, that this precise period was one of great learning and bitter controversy in the Church. The Council of Nice, perhaps the most celebrated in all ecclesiastical history, was held just at this time (A.D. 324), and to its affirmations Protestant and Catholic now alike refer as authority. But the learning and piety of the Church and the clergy is less important to the argument than the

fact of the bitter enmity existing between those holding various creeds, and the careful watch kept by one on another for any and every ground of accusation. The Arian controversy was going on. It was a very difficult time, perhaps more difficult than would have been this nineteenth century, for the Church in Jerusalem to deceive the world by an imposture calculated to increase its power and influence.

If, therefore, there was any deceit about the discovery of the cross, it was in all probability arranged by Constantine himself, so as to impose on his old mother, the Christian Church, and the Roman world.

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#### IV.

##### THE PLACE OF CRUCIFIXION.

THERE was very small possibility of deceit with reference to the place of the crucifixion and burial. The spot was well known. Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea (who was in Jerusalem at the dedication of the church built by Constantine at Golgotha), states that the tomb of Joseph had been purposely covered

deep with earth brought from a distance, over which was a pavement, and on this a temple of Venus; and that this desecration was by pagans, for the purpose of consigning the tomb to oblivion.

Helena, authorized by Constantine, destroyed the temple of Venus and began to remove the earth which was polluted by the heathen worship. She was not seeking the sepulchre. The special monumental church was to be built over the place of crucifixion. The sepulchre was found, greatly to the surprise of all, intact, buried in the earth. The Basilica was erected over the rock of Calvary, the sepulchre being in the court in front of the church.

If the statement of Eusebius was untrue, it could not in those days have gained credence. Jerusalem was full of learned, wily enemies of Christianity, who, had there been any such gross blunder as locating the place within the walls of the old city (where it certainly could not have been), would have exposed it with delight. The walls of the old city on the west side had never been overthrown, so far as history records. Modern writers have curiously misread history on this point. Outside of that western wall, and close to it, was the place pointed out to Helena as Golgotha.

It is only within the present century that some able writers have quite vehemently combatted the idea that Helena found the right place. Some have even undertaken to locate it elsewhere, on such evidence as can now be found.

The topographical argument rests entirely on the question of the line of the "second" wall, which some modern writers are confident must have run west of the Church of the Sepulchre, thus including the locality within the city of the time of Christ. On this point, I think the learned men of the fourth century, and all the centuries since then, are right, and the few doubters of the nineteenth century are wrong. I think that I have seen the second wall, in a wall of massive stones, which I found in 1870, exposed for some hours by the digging out of the rear of a shop on the Via Dolorosa. This wall was of huge stones, Hebrew, probably. Climbing to the top, in the rear of the shop, I found that that pile of ruins known to some as the ruins of the Basilica of Constantine, lay against and concealed the western side of this wall.

Argument on this subject seems of small account when the simple fact, undisputed by any one, is viewed, that Helena and her advisers located the place



of the crucifixion three hundred years after its occurrence, and no one then, nor thereafter, for fifteen hundred years, disputed the location, although for all that time it was the very heart of Christendom.

But it is contended that Helena, and Eusebius, and Macarius, then Bishop of Jerusalem, and other good and wise men, could not have had any satisfactory evidence from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because the early Christians did not reverence relics or special localities, and would not have preserved the knowledge of this locality. Certainly this allegation is not only without authority, but contrary to every authority. And in the interests of history, it seems necessary to expose the untenable character of such an allegation, lest the sudden and universal devotion of the Christian world to the discovered locality should seem miraculous. For if they had no previous regard for such a place, and no love, respect, or care for personal memorials of the Life, Passion, Death, and Resurrection, then their subsequent treatment of cross and sepulchre is inexplicable.

The Hebrew race were noted for the honor done to the burial-places of their ancestors. "Whose sepulchre is with us to this day," is a common saying in their sacred history, indicating clearly that such places were known and their memory kept.

In the ancient tombs, now remaining by hundreds, hewn in the rocks around Jerusalem, one of the most common styles, often repeated, is that in which an outer chamber was left open, for relatives and friends to visit the tomb and sit within the portal, and often a small window opened through the wall from this room into the dark and closed chamber in which the bodies lay. I have seen many tombs of this description immediately around Jerusalem. These tombs were for generations of families, and this custom of visiting graves is a Hebrew custom to the present day. All the habits of the Jerusalem Christians must have been in favor of their preserving with accuracy the localities of important events in the life of the Lord.

The absence of written accounts during the period intervening from the crucifixion to the arrival of Helena, has been noted by some as if the present want of such accounts were evidence that none existed then. To all who are familiar with the subject of ancient writings, and the evidence of the vast quantity and variety which did exist, but which have disappeared, this idea will seem quite erroneous. Of making of books in old times there was no end. Not only were there great libraries, but immense numbers

of private manuscripts, letters, poems, histories, of which we have ample evidence. These have absolutely vanished. We do not possess one in a thousand of the works of ancient authors. Millions of pages of ancient records, perhaps in Jerusalem alone, have perished utterly. Eusebius alludes to the "writings" from which information was obtained; but the customs of the East were such that in a matter of locality like this, where only three hundred years had elapsed, the verbal evidence of residents would have all the weight that would now be given to a topographical map duly verified and recorded.

The accuracy with which oral tradition delivers history from mouth to mouth, and from generation to generation, is a distinguished fact among Oriental nations. So perfect is this, that among the modern Eastern races news of important events flies rapidly from place to place without variation or exaggeration. The people are not excitable. There is no temptation, as among Western nations, to exaggerate for the purpose of creating a sensation. The old men in the khalili bazaar in Cairo, who sit calmly smoking away the time, if they heard that a building had fallen in a neighboring street and killed a hundred people, would but take their pipes from their mouths

and say gently, "Did you say a hundred? Mashallah!" and resume their smoking. Here or in Europe there would be a wild excitement and a fierce rush of crowds to the scene. Such people repeat statements with deliberation and care. Our abundant knowledge of ancient manners and customs, and the well known fact that they were much the same in ancient days in the East as now, give us authority for believing that the transmission of information was then accurate.

There is every reason to believe that the Christians of Jerusalem were accustomed, in the years that followed the life of the Lord on earth, to converse constantly about every event in that life, and above all things about the events of the last scene, which they believed, as we believe it, the most sublime and awful event which had ever occurred in the universe of God.

It seems to be quite absurd to say that the early Christians confined their thoughts wholly to the spiritual character of the Lord's mission, and cared nothing for the physical memorials of his incarnation. Remember the morning of the Resurrection. Let us picture, if we can, the holy women coming in the cold starlight to the tomb of Joseph. As they approached it, it was to them, in their yet untaught love and faith, the burial-place of their murdered Master, a

place whither, so long as their lives of sorrow on earth should continue, they expected to come, morning and evening, and mourn by his dead dust. So I have frequently seen women in the East, at the break of dawn, sitting by the graves of their beloved dead. They approach, and the great rock stands out black in the gloom, with the closed doorway and the seal on the stone, and the guards standing—Roman sentinels—watching, that none should open it. If that were all, if, as the poor ignorant mourners believed, that were the end, and the beloved body that lay there was to sink into dust with all the old dead of old Jerusalem, then, so long as disciple or scoffer lived in the city, from generation to generation, this would have been pointed out with Oriental accuracy as the burial-place of Jesus the Nazarene.

How much more, since that was not all? “Who shall roll us back the stone, that we may do the last sad offices for this poor body of our dead, dead Master?” The guard heard the question with the stolid indifference of the Roman soldier. When suddenly an angel appeared, and rolled back the stone, and showed the astonished mourners and terrified guard the empty tomb. “See, He is not here. He is risen. Why seek ye the living among the dead?”

There lay the grave-clothes, but the grave was empty. The seal was unbroken, but the crucified body was not there.

Well might Roman soldiers sink fainting to the ground and remember the words of their centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God."

Who will tell us that this was the last visit paid by Mary or the disciples to that tomb in the garden? Who will expect a sensible man to believe that the scene of this stupendous event, unparalleled in the history of man, was treated with indifference by those who loved the Lord, and suffered to be so wholly unknown as to be forgotten?

But localities were not the only physical memorials of Christ. There were many others treasured with devout affection by the early Christians. Were they of blood and emotions different from other races of men? Human nature has been much the same in all ages. We do not forget the graves of our beloved dead. We visit them, lay flowers on them. We keep little memorials of them. It is even common to keep relics of those in no way related to us, but in whose names we have interest. The bullet which killed a great general is preserved in a national museum. The bloody coat in which Nelson fell at

Trafalgar is one of the treasures of a princely cabinet. The old gray coat of the Little Corporal and Great Emperor has moved many a heart with strong emotion, as the eye has caught it in its case in one of the halls of the Louvre. While we in America have small reverence for religious relics, we have a great deal for personal relics. Our historical societies have cases filled with swords of generals, with chairs and tankards, and small memorials of those who, for one reason or another, are held in memory. We pay high prices for old autographs. It is some two hundred and fifty years since the *Mayflower* brought to New England a colony of men and women, and the rock where they are said to have landed is New England's pride, and their household goods are relics enshrined in a hundred cabinets.

With all this modern human nature visible around us, there are those who would have us believe that no one thought of keeping a relic of the King of kings. No one cared for a memorial of that humble, sorrowful life which ended in the burst of glory above the Mount of Olives when He ascended to his Father and his throne.

I don't believe them. Lazarus would never part in life with a cup which that hand had touched in the

evening of the day when it had grasped his hand just loosed from the grave-clothes. The daughter of Jairus would hand down to her children the memorials of his coming to her father's house.

The Son of Man had not great store of worldly goods. He was very poor. As now in the East, so then, it is probable that all the clothing a poor man possessed was what he wore. "Take up thy bed and walk" meant as it would mean now, take up the coarse bournoose, the outer cloak, which you threw down to lie on, put it on and go your way. He had no home or household goods or earthly possessions. But Judea and Galilee were full of memorials of his presence, and these were treasured with devout affection and reverence; and when the days of trial came, and the enemy beleaguered Jerusalem and swept Galilee with the besom of war, these were the last possessions with which the persecuted would consent to part.

That spiritual worship which the Lord taught was no whit less spiritual because the loving disciple held in his hand while he prayed a memorial of the bodily presence on earth of Him who had gone to his throne on high. Do you love your dead child any less when you hold in your hand a lock of his hair?



Do not reply to this that such love is of the baser and earthly sort. That human body is the link which makes Him our Elder Brother. I think you would do well to teach yourselves and your children to draw near to Christ the man. It is the only way in which human creatures can at all get near to Him. Dwell on every event of his life and passion. For this the whole history of that life and passion has been given us. Imagine, if you can, the divine benevolence of his countenance, the glory that must have been in his smile, the lustre of his eye. Nay, more, when faith grows weak and doubt overtakes you, faint-hearted, do not attempt to lift your heart to the ineffable majesty enthroned on high until you have first heard and obeyed his voice: "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hands, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."

Depend upon it, the Christians of Jerusalem knew and told to one another many of those things which Jesus did that John left unwritten; and they knew well every spot where the things were done. And if it be said that the Christians were expelled from Jerusalem, this is an error. I do not believe that from the day of the crucifixion to this, evening ever

closed in on Jerusalem unaccompanied by the voice of Christian prayer. Nor is there any historical reason for believing it.

If, therefore, there was any imposture practiced in reference to the cross, it was not with reference to the locality where Helena looked for it. Every one knew that.

The temple which had been erected over the sepulchre was destroyed, the heaps of earth or rubbish which covered it were removed, and the tomb exposed to view. It stood on a plain, between two slightly elevated ridges of rock. Near it, in one of these ridges, were other rock-hewn tombs, showing that this was an ancient place of graves. The other ridge to the eastward presented a bluff, a spur of rough rock, standing up about fifteen feet above the level of the ground between it and the sepulchre. This rock was rent in two by a great rift, yet it was a majestic point, and may have been, as it was then understood to be, the place of the crucifixion.

## V.

### INVENTION OF THE CROSS.

BUT the desire of the Emperor Constantine was not wholly accomplished. The sepulchre had not been looked for, and its discovery was a surprise. The cross was yet to be found, and the search was pursued by the Empress. The ridge, on which was the place of the crucifixion, extended eastward toward the old wall of the city, and Helena was told by the resident Christians that, as the crucifixion occurred on the eve of the Sabbath, the people had hurried the removal of the tree and all traces of the execution; that the cross had been thrown into a pit which was under the side of this same ledge of rock, where, being an unclean piece of wood, not to be touched, it had been covered over and left, and where it would probably be found. Against this statement is placed the supposed Hebrew custom of burning crosses after crucifixions, and the improbability that an exception was made in this instance. But Helena caused the spot to be excavated. She found there sundry pieces of wood.

## VI.

### DOUBTS.

THUS far history. Here, unquestionably, was the opportunity for imposture; and if there were any pre-arranged deception, it was at this point that Helena was deceived. Her own sincerity is not questionable. The deep hole under the side of the ledge of natural rock, descending far below the level of the church floor, in which she found the wood, is known as the Chapel of the Invention of the Cross. While other writers of Church history, who were not present, record this account of the discovery of the cross, Eusebius—who was in Jerusalem at this time, or soon after, and who wrote very much in his *Life of Constantine* about all that was done by the Emperor through Helena in Jerusalem—is silent on this subject. This fact is suspicious. Did Eusebius doubt the honesty of those who led the Empress to this discovery? That she did find the wood is beyond dispute, for the world rang with the story. Why, then, did the Bishop of Cæsarea omit to record the event? And it is also proper here to notice the general silence of any cotemporaries of Helena on

this subject, from which a strong argument is adduced against the whole story of the discovery. This is certainly an argument against the verity of the wood; but the unanimous assent of Church historians immediately after this period, the universal acceptance of the fact by the Fathers and the whole Christian world, leave no room for doubt that the discovery was made. There is no extant account of the discovery immediately cotemporary with that event. If any such accounts were written, they are among the innumerable lost manuscripts. The earliest notice, however, is only about twenty years later, by Cyril of Jerusalem, and from this time nearly all the historians and Fathers whose works are extant describe, or allude to it as a historical fact. Jerome ridiculed the idea of Constantine in his attempt to connect the discovery with the prophecy of Zechariah, but did not doubt the fact of the discovery. No historical event could be much better attested. We may easily believe that Eusebius was an unbeliever in the verity of the wood, and as he is a very trustworthy authority, his silence on a subject of such importance must be regarded as significant. I think it a fair statement of the case to say that, if Eusebius were found united with the other Fathers in

relating the facts and accepting the verity of the wood, it would be difficult for an impartial student of history to doubt the fact of its verity. The total silence of Eusebius, vastly more important than would have been the silence of any other historian, leaves the subject of the authenticity of the wood in suspicious doubt.

There is one possible exception to this general silence. The Emperor Constantine, after learning of the discoveries in Jerusalem, wrote to Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, instructing him as to the church to be built over the holy places, and leaving the plan very much to the discretion of the Bishop. He began this letter with expressions of gratitude to God for the wonderful discovery of "the token" of the passion of Christ, which had lain so long concealed, and was now discovered. This has been commonly thought to be a reference to the sepulchre, but it may equally well refer to the cross; and the instructions which follow, for a glorious building, certainly seem to have been understood by Macarius as referring to the cross and the place of crucifixion rather than to the tomb. For the church was built, not over the sepulchre, but over the place where the cross was found and over Calvary, the sepulchre being left in

the open court in front. It is also probable that the "Exaltation of the Cross" commemorated in the Church by the annual festival of September 14th, was an important part of the ceremony of the dedication of the Basilica, in A.D. 335. This festival is known in Jerusalem as early as the beginning of the next century. Sophronius (7th century) speaks of it as "in ancient times" preceding the feast of the *anastasis* (the restoration), but it was afterward changed to the 14th. It is certainly a very old festival, mentioned in various Martyrologies; and the restoration of the cross by Heraclius, to be hereafter described, was probably arranged to be on the day of that festival.

The Feast of the Invention of the Cross, on May 3d, is said to have been ordered by Silvester I., who died in 335, the year of the dedication of the church, but it is not certain that this day was observed until the eighth century.

(The Greek and Ethiopic Churches celebrate May 7th as the day when a miraculous apparition of a cross was said to be seen over Jerusalem in 346. Cyril of Jerusalem mentioned it in a letter to Constantine written a few years later).

## VII.

### THE WOOD AND THE NAILS.

THERE were found in the excavation more than one cross, and the Fathers, on whose accounts we now depend, do not agree as to the means of identifying the cross of our Lord and distinguishing it from the crosses of the two thieves. Chrysostom and Ambrose say that the title, or a part of it, remained attached to the cross. Another writer states that the true cross was identified by carrying it to a sick woman, who was healed by touching it. The latter account, subsequently suiting the veneration which the Church entertained for the cross, was generally accepted as the manner in which the true wood was verified. The age of miracles was not then supposed to be past. It was not long since handkerchiefs, which had touched the apostles, had been carried to the sick and cured them. It was therefore not strange that the people believed that the wood which had been dyed with the blood of their Lord should also heal disease. Among the wood found, either attached to a cross or separate, was a fragment of a tablet on which was part of the inscription or-



dered by Pilate. Several nails were also found ; it is not certain how many. Only two are definitely mentioned in some of the accounts, but other writers speak of three and of four, and of nails used for the tablet inscription.

There was a difference of opinion in the early Church as to the number of nails and the position of the feet of the Lord. They were sometimes represented as nailed separately and sometimes crossed and pierced with one nail. Cyprian, Augustine, Gregory of Tours, Innocent III., Theodoret, and Rufinus all say that four nails were used, two for the hands and two for the feet.

A very interesting discussion has arisen in reference to the nails of the cross. The words of the Lord to Thomas clearly show that his hands were pierced by the nails ; but whether the feet were pierced or only bound to the cross by cords, has been a question. Christian writers believe that the feet were nailed, differing as to their position and the number of nails. Opponents of Christianity have denied that there is any evidence of this. The discussion was interesting mainly as bearing on the prophetic passage : " They pierced my hands and my feet," and also because the assertion has been made

by infidel writers that the death of Christ was only apparent, and not real, and that the resurrection was not miraculous. It is manifest that if his feet were wounded with nails, the walk to Emmaus on the day of the resurrection would have been impossible unless the resurrection was a miracle. When He appeared to his disciples, He said, "See my hands and my feet, that is I myself," thus apparently calling their attention to the wounds in both. The mention of his feet could have been for no other reason. The testimony of Justin Martyr, however, is conclusive. He lived and wrote in the second century. His conversion to Christianity was in A.D. 132. He was learned and accomplished—a Platonist. It is not impossible or improbable that he had known and conversed with many who were present at the crucifixion. He describes the literal fulfillment of prophecy in the fact of the pierced feet. His evidence is uncontradicted, and sufficient even without the confirmation it receives from Tertullian.

Now, whether these pieces of wood which Helena found were ingeniously prepared by the Christian residents of Jerusalem to deceive her and Constantine, or whether the Emperor himself, having in view his favorite sign of the cross, and a determination to

make use of the Christian faith, had arranged the whole spectacle of this discovery, or whether the simple fact was that the cross had lain buried there, and was found where the Christians said it was, every reader must decide for himself.

The Roman world believed it, and the faith that had carried the labarum to victory was transferred with ten-fold force to the wood of the cross itself.

The discovery of those old pieces of wood in Jerusalem shook the world with an emotion scarce ever before experienced.

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## VIII.

### A TELEGRAPHIC TRADITION.

ALL along the coast of the Levant, on various prominent headlands, are remains of old towers, which are pointed out with singular agreement of traditions as built by order of Constantine, to be used in conveying from Jerusalem to Byzantium the intelligence of the discovery of the cross. If this tradition be correct, there is a clear implication that

the Emperor had confidence in the search, and had arranged for the sensation which should follow it. True, this may have been honestly done, the preparation being based on information obtained from Jerusalem, that if any authorized agent of the empire could remove Hadrian's temple he would certainly find the cross.

Finding no account of it, I can only state the fact that in several voyages along the coast of the Levant, I have noticed old towers on the headlands, and on asking what they were, received, at different places and times, from Oriental Christians, the same reply that they were built for watch-towers to signal the discovery of the cross. This is very likely to be another of those countless traditions in the East which are connected, without reason, with the Empress Helena. For pretty much every old church and building of every kind, about which nothing is known, is assigned to her in Eastern Christian tradition. But it is a grand old notion, and many a night on those seas, I have imagined that signal flashing along the headlands.

There was no Morse then, and no telegraphic wires were laid, to be the thrilling nerves along which the news of the discovery should spread through all the

Christian body. But when the shout went up above the walls of Jerusalem that the cross was found, they lit the signal fire on the tower of David on Mount Zion. Far off at Ramah, where Samuel had once dwelt, a watcher, with eye fixed on Jerusalem, saw the light and touched his beacon. On the hill of Omri, Samaria the strong, they saw the flames, and kindled their own to speed the tidings. The cedar wood blazed high on Lebanon. Berytus flashed it on to Tripoli, and Tripoli to Antioch, city of the Christian name. Then across the gulf to Tarsus, and the flame gleamed from Mount Taurus on the cold waves of the Cydnus and leaped on to Laodicea and to Sardis. Pactolus was never so golden as in that midnight light, gleaming over the white walls of the already crumbling temple of Cybele. From island to island it fled along the Ægean Sea. From the hills of Lesbos, where the wine flowed red and foaming, they saw it who watched on Mount Ida, many-fountained Ida, and the plain of Troy, and the yellow waters of Scamander were lit with the ruddy glow. Far Olympus, crowned with eternal snow, Olympus of Bithynia, caught the news, and the blaze on his summit shone over the Propontis, even to the window where the Roman Emperor sat in the solemn

night, and then the shout that had gone up an hour before in Jerusalem, was echoed and re-echoed a hundred times by the myriads who thronged the midnight streets of the new Imperial City. The cross was found. Yes, they believed it.

We could have believed it then ourselves, but these are colder times. While men speak eloquently about the great battles of the world, they might speak more eloquently about smaller events no less decisive. What a discovery that lot of old wood was! No man can tell what great effects may proceed from small causes; and if you seek the origins of the world's great changes, you will find them often in very small incidents. An old woman, digging for old wood in a hole in Jerusalem, was digging the graves of millions of her fellow-creatures, digging under the foundations of empires yet to be, digging the pathway to power for future monarchs, digging the very canals and railroads of modern civilization. Who can tell what might have been the history of the world, if Helena had never found the cross?



## THE KIND OF WOOD.

NOT a little was written by the early Christians on the wood of the cross, its origin, and its character. Various traditions became popular as to the growth of the wood and the place of its growth. A mile or two west of Jerusalem, in a valley among the hills, is a Greek monastery, recently repaired and put in order, where boys receive a free education. It is one of the best regulated and most useful of all the charities of the churches in and around the holy city. This is the Monastery of the Holy Cross. The buildings are very old, some of them very fine. The foundation dates from an early period, not long after the discovery of the cross by Helena, and the tradition of the establishment is that it stands on the spot where the tree grew from which the cross was cut. The determining such a spot, and marking it by a monument at a time like that, is an indication of the veneration for localities which the early Christians exhibited. The world was vibrating with the news that the cross was found, and it met the locality-loving spirit of the times to find and announce the place where the wood grew. So it was done.

Then began questions as to the genealogy of the tree. How came this wood ever to grow? Whence was it that on some bright morning, long ago, among the wild flowers that carpet Holy Land, a bud should burst the ground, put forth its small leaves, and struggle up into the life and atmosphere, only to be the bearer of the heaviest load of sin and agony ever borne by wood of earthly growth?

Many traditions obtained circulation on this subject, not devoid of interest. Most of them were variations of one which may be thus given in its simplest form :

When Adam, wearied with a thousand years of toil, sank on the earth, exhausted and ready to die, he sent Seth to the angel who kept the way of Eden, to beg of him balm from the garden, wherewith to anoint his limbs. But the angel refused the balm, and only gave to Seth three seeds of the apple from the tree of forbidden fruit, and commanded him, when Adam should be dead, to put those seeds under his tongue and bury him; promising him that from those seeds should spring a tree that should bear fruit whereby Adam should be saved and live again. From them did spring three trees, of which the wood of the cross was made; He who died on it being the promised fruit the tree should bear.



This legend had numerous variations. A cutting of the tree is spoken of, instead of the seeds, which was planted by Seth on Adam's grave. The rod of Moses was cut from this tree. Solomon hewed down the tree to make a beam or pillar of the temple from its wood, but it would not fit. The Queen of Sheba refused to go near it, prophesying that it would bring destruction to the Hebrews. Solomon cut it away and had it buried. The pool of Bethesda was near its place of burial, and received its healing qualities from this fact. The wood floated to the surface of the water during the trial of Christ, and was taken for the upright beam of the cross.

Variations of this legend abounded in what is now well called the folk-lore of various European peoples. The aspen tree was accused of trembling because the cross was of aspen wood. In England a notion has been heard of, how extensively we know not, that the wood was mistletoe, then a tree, but ever since a parasite. Maundeville (fourteenth century) speaks of a tree which was still lying as a bridge over the Kedron, "of which the cross was made."

The early writers were fond of finding the cross prefigured. Justin Martyr sees it in the paschal lamb, spitted with crossing spits, (*Dial. c. Tryph.*) In the

Epistle of Barnabas (c. xi.), it was said that at the battle of Rephidim the Holy Spirit caused Moses to make the sign of the cross in holding up his hands, and in the same chapter the passage in 2 Esdras, v. 5, "and blood shall drop out of the wood," is cited as prophetic of the cross. Jacob's ladder, the waving of the sacrificial offerings in the temple, various attitudes of men in ordinary labor, all were brought to notice as types of the cross. "Birds in flying," said Jerome, "make the sign of the cross; a man swimming or praying takes the form of the cross." It may be curious to note here, that although that superb constellation, the Southern Cross, must have been well known to Christians of the Thebaid and farther northward, we find no definite allusion to it in any of the early Christian writers.

The Venerable Bede, writing in the fifth century, says the cross was of four kinds of wood—cypress, cedar, pine, and box. John Cantacuzenus asserted the same. Innocent says the upright was one wood, the transverse beam another, the title a third, and the feet were supported on a projecting step made of a fourth wood.

Others assert that the cross was of cypress, cedar, palm, and olive-wood.

Lipsius, the most learned and exhaustive writer on the subject, thinks, with reason, that the cross was oak—a wood abounding in the country, easily procured, and strong for the purpose. He thinks such relics as he had seen were oak.

The most careful examination that I have been able to make of some of the larger fragments which still exist, leads me to think that the wood was oak. The tablet at Santa Croce in Rome, which, there is no reason to doubt, is that found by the Empress, had at first glance the appearance of old olive-wood; but on closer and careful examination with a glass, I was inclined to regard it as oak. The Vienna fragments are very like old oak. But all the fragments I have seen are so discolored, and their surface grain is so disintegrated by time and changes of temperature, that no one can assert with much confidence what species of wood any of them are.

There are very few fragments anywhere which profess to be relics of the Holy Cross. The common idea that enough wood is shown in various places as relics of the true cross to build a dozen crosses, is a very foolish error, invented by some one who imagined that when a church claimed to possess a piece of the true cross, it must be a piece of at least some feet in

length and solid contents. Generally speaking, that very rare and highly-prized relic, "a piece of the true cross," whether possessed by a church, a crowned head, or a private individual, is a minute speck of wood, scarcely visible to the naked eye, set sometimes on an ivory tablet, always enclosed in a costly reliquaire.

No other fragment is known so large as the Santa Croce tablet, which is not ten inches long by seven wide. There are but very few fragments known which are large enough to be called pieces of wood. Leaving out the Santa Croce tablet, all the relics of the Holy Cross, claimed to be such, that I have been able to hear of in all the world, if gathered into one piece, would not make another block of wood as large as the Santa Croce tablet. This tablet is not generally spoken of as a part of the cross itself.

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## X.

### CONSTANTINE.

HELENA sent to Constantine a piece of the wood and several of the nails. We say "several," for the number is uncertain. Rufinus says that she sent

“Clavos, . . . . ex quibus ille frenos composuit quibus uteretur ad bellum. Et ex aliis galeam, etc.”

It would require three, and perhaps four, to meet the requirements of this statement, which, however, was probably not intended to be accurate. Whether these were sent immediately after the discovery, or delayed a year or more, does not appear. Constantine was doubtless then in Byzantium or Nicomedia, planning the royal city of Constantinople. He directed the wood to be placed in the head of a statue of himself, to adorn the new capitol. He used part of the nails for a helmet, and one or more of them for ornaments on the bridle of his horse, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah, which foretold a universal gathering of the Church when “Holiness to the Lord” shall be on the bridles of the horses. This fact illustrates the determination of Constantine to make every possible use of the influence of the cross, natural or supernatural, for he thus made his standard, his helmet, and his war-horse alike bearers of the talisman. And the helmet and war-horse of this emperor had not been, and were not likely to be, kept for peaceful show.

What became of these or of the other nails, if any, reserved by Helena, it is impossible to say. State-

ments and traditions innumerable are found in all ages since, but they are so inconsistent and contradictory, they require so many nails to satisfy us of their possible truth, that the conclusion is irresistible that the history of the original nails found can not be traced. Crowns that have claimed to be banded with their iron have no historical genealogy on which we can depend, and we therefore abandon them as hopelessly lost. The iron crown of Monza, commonly supposed to have a band made from one of the nails, has no title to such a claim. This is an old crown, but three hundred years ago this tradition was not attached to it.

There is no question in history more perplexing, scarcely any more interesting, than this, of the motives inducing the whole conduct of Constantine with reference to Christianity. Retaining the old idea of the pagan emperors that the religion and its priests were subjects of the imperial command, he regulated Church matters without himself entering the Church. He was not even baptized until in the last hours of his life; yet he judged the Arian controversy, and revised his judgment, approved the Council of Nice, and denounced all who should not adopt the Nicene Creed, made the cross his standard, and abolished for

it the imperial eagles. But apparently, at the very time when he was publishing "Holiness to the Lord" on his bridle, he was absorbed in jealousy of his son and heir, Crispus, whom he foully and secretly put to death (A.D. 326). His personal character gives no indications of the refining and elevating influence of the faith he upheld. He died, leaving the empire nominally Christian, but his death was the signal for the barbarian character of his race to manifest itself. He had murdered his oldest son, best of the family, and his nephew, Licinius; he had murdered his wife of twenty years. His successor, her second son, Constantius, before his two brothers could arrive on the scene, destroyed in one horrible massacre nearly all others that were left of the blood of the first Christian emperor.

If we knew more of the religious character of the age in which Constantine lived, we might better judge whether the pagan faith had become so vague as to amount to no faith at all, and thus the time grown well suited for the emperor to adopt and foster a religion whose purity and power he recognized. He was a man of great ability. The Decree of Milan was a bold and successful stroke of policy. The restoration of all Christian rights and property, star-

ting as it was to those who had but lately been under the heel of Diocletian, attached to the new monarch every Christian in the empire. He could see that here was an opportunity to recover for himself that religious power which former emperors wielded when pagan faith was a power, but which ceased to exist when men cared nothing for religion or its altars. Was it, then, the sagacious politician, the wily statesman, who resolved to take this new religion, gather to it the infidel, atheist masses in all parts of the Roman Empire, and wield the power thus created? Was the story of the vision and the "in hoc signo vinces" which he told to Eusebius only a revival of the same sort of story which had helped his predecessors in the early days of Rome to keep their followers in hand, by convincing them of the direct favor of the gods? Was the mission of Helena to Jerusalem to seek the cross, and the arrangement for her to find it, all a part of the same cunning plan to consolidate his empire by the aid of religious enthusiasm?

It is a black side of character to look at, and it would be pleasanter to think the other explanation true, that he had a good old English mother, a devout Christian, who taught him from his youth up, and whom he loved and kept near him always; and that



in all that he did, the faith and teachings of his mother were dear to him, and that to her influence is due the subjection of the Roman Empire to Christianity. But it must be confessed that in the personal character of Constantine there is very little to admire.

Our subject, rife with suggestions to the honest student of history, will lead him in weighing the motives of Constantine, to observe here the beginning of the relations of Church and State. The Roman emperors had wielded all the power of the religion. Constantine made Christianity the State religion, and used it; perhaps made it so for the sake of using it. Thus the Church became subject to the State. But later the Church threw off the yoke and subjugated the State. And the Roman history is not the only instructive history of this kind. The absolute divorce of Church and State, which existed before the days of Constantine, has scarcely since that day been seen except in America.

## XI.

### IESUS NAZARENUS REX JUDAEORUM.

AMONG the pieces of wood found in the pit was a fragment which contained parts of a trilingual inscription. This fragment Helena conveyed to Rome. When received in that city, parts of a Greek, of a Latin, and parts of the letters of a Hebrew inscription were legible. It was at once inclosed in a leaden box.

The basilica of *Santa Croce in Ferusalemme* was erected by Constantine to receive this piece of wood. The foundations were laid in earth brought from Jerusalem. By his special order the relic was deposited above the vaulted roof of the church, in a sort of dead window which was walled up. A mosaic inscription recorded its place of deposit, and the church which bore its name thus preserved it for many centuries.

As years rolled along the fate of Rome changed, and the Church of the Holy Cross (which, although within the old walls, is far away from the modern center of the city, and actually in the country) was sadly neglected and sank into obscurity. The mosaic

inscription was defaced, and became illegible, so that at length it was only a tradition that the church possessed this piece of the sacred wood, but no one could point it out among the relics in the treasury-chamber. High up over the walls of Rome, in silent obscurity, while intestine quarrels shook the capital, through civil war and invasion, through all the succession of murder and shame which marked the history of the Roman Empire, through the dark and still years when ruin fell on old Rome, and palace and wall crumbled into dust, surmounting the falling stones of the old city, and unaffected by its changing dynasties and changing inhabitants, the wood of the cross remained in the vaulted roof of Santa Croce. After many centuries, some workmen, repairing the old church, accidentally broke into the walled-up window, and found the leaden chest. Believing that they had found treasure, they were at the first disposed to conceal the box, but on opening it they were disappointed at sight of a somewhat musty and very ancient-looking piece of wood. Little did they imagine the splendor of that wood, or over what white brow the faith of men had placed its sacred characters. The joy of Rome when it learned of the discovery was great beyond descrip-

tion. The city rang with the shouts of the people, and the title of scorn which the derision of a Roman Governor invented for the cross of the victim, became the object of adoration to Rome itself.

Part of this tablet fragment is still in the Church of Santa Croce at Rome. The appearance is that of a decayed piece of board, on which remain traces of inscriptions in three languages. The Hebrew is quite illegible, only parts of a few letters remaining visible. I am not aware that any careful examination has been made of this old piece of wood in modern times, and no publication which I have been able to find has given any account of it since the seventeenth century. It is preserved in a chapel, behind and above the high altar of the church, access to which is had by a long winding passage through the rear part of the Basilica, and ascending numerous steps.

I owe sincere thanks to an eminent dignitary of the Church who procured for me the privilege of examining the relic, and accompanied me one pleasant afternoon to the chapel in the old Basilica, which has so long been its guardian. The Greek *Nazarenous B-* and the Latin, *Nazarenus Re-* are still legible. Traces of Hebrew letters are also visible on the upper edge of the fragment. They are cut in



THE SANTA CROCE TABLET.

(One quarter the size of the original.)

the wood, not written on it. This peculiarity is worth noticing: that the Greek word (*Nazarcnous*) is wrongly spelled, and both the Latin and Greek inscriptions read from right to left, after the Hebrew custom. From this it has been argued that a Hebrew did the work for Pilate. Others have held that the workmanship of the different parts is so diverse in character that the various inscriptions must have been cut by different persons, the order from right to left being selected by Pilate because his inscription was intended to be in some sense insulting to the Jews. So far as my observation extends, no one has thought of denying that it is the piece of wood sent to Rome by Helena, for the reception of which the original Basilica was erected in the year 331. It is annually exhibited with great pomp on Easter Sunday.

Bonus, de Cruce Triumphante, gives an engraving of the tablet, and from him it would appear that the board was painted white and the letters were red. Alban Butler says it was so when the leaden case was discovered and opened (in 1492), but that these colors are since faded.\* I can scarcely credit these statements, for I did not find in 1870

\* F. C. H. in *N. and Q.*, 2d S., IX. 515.

any trace of paint on the wood, the color and surface presenting the appearance of very ancient wood, which has never had any varnish or paint on it. The letters are incised, and may have been painted once, but seem now only dark on account of the change of color by age. Decay invades the inscription. The letter N in Nazarenus has quite disappeared in the dry rot, as have the lower parts of the letters RE in the same word, and the beginning of *Basileus* in the Greek, and of Rex in the Latin. The illustration will show what portion of the entire tablet this professes to be.

I made a rough drawing of the tablet while examining it, and after returning to my hotel, colored it from memory ; but as I have not any knack at such use of either kind of pencil, I can only say that the cut, which I present herewith, is a reduced copy of my work and not of the tablet, of which, however, it will give a fair idea. The picture is certainly not without interest, since it represents what all Christians of all names for more than a thousand years believed to be a part of the tablet which Pilate placed above the head of Christ.

## XII.

### VĒRA CRUX.

THE principal portion of the wood, now and always afterward known as Vera Crux, the True Cross, was retained by Helena in Jerusalem and deposited in the great church or basilica erected under the order of Constantine over the place of the crucifixion and burial, and dedicated in the year 335. The Church of the Resurrection, or, as it is commonly called, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, now in Jerusalem, occupies the same site, but is vastly more extensive, reaching from beyond the Sepulchre on the west to the Chapel of the Invention of the Cross on the extreme east.

For three hundred years the cross was in the custody of the Bishop of Jerusalem, and was annually exhibited on Easter Sunday to the pilgrims who thronged the Holy City. From time to time persons of large wealth, or of high position, were permitted to purchase fragments, small splinters, which were carried to Europe and placed in monasteries, abbeys, and churches. These were always received with



great veneration, and many of these relics doubtless remain still in the treasuries of European religious establishments. Tradition began to say that the wood constantly replaced itself as fast as splinters were cut from it.

To some of these fragments we Protestants owe a great deal more than most of us imagine. For this old wood not only shook empires, but it warmed hearts and gave to the world some of its most highly valued poetry and song.

It was about the year 580 that a fragment of the wood was sent to France, of whose history we know this, that it gave to the Christian world that magnificent hymn of the Church, "*Vexilla regis prodeunt*," which in its original form and in translations has moved the hearts of Christians in all times since.

There was a church to be consecrated at Poitiers, in France, in or about the year 580, and Gregory of Tours had received certain relics to be there placed. Venantius Fortunatus wrote a hymn, which Dr. Neale says was composed on the occasion of the reception of these relics. This hymn was one of those inspirations which enter at once into the life of the Church—one of the songs which men grow to loving so much, which become so sacred by reason of the

long successions of generations who utter them in praise and prayer that we believe they will last the Church so long as it is a Church militant, and we sometimes think may be part of the utterances to be used by the Church Triumphant.

It is obvious from the hymn that the chief among the relics was a fragment of the cross. Let us introduce it here in its best known modern form :

Vexilla regis prodeunt :  
Fulget crucis mysterium,  
Qua vita mortem pertulit,  
Et morte vitam protulit.

Quæ vulnerata lanceæ  
Mucrone diro, criminum  
Ut nos lavaret sordibus,  
Manavit unda et sanguine.

Impleta sunt, quæ concinit  
David fideli carmine,  
Dicendo nationibus :  
Regnavit a ligno Deus.

Arbor decora et fulgida,  
Ornata regis purpura,  
Electa digno stipite  
Tam sancta membra tangere.

Beata, cujus brachiis  
Præitium pependit sæculi,  
Statera facta corporis  
Tulit que prædam tartari.

O crux ave, spes unica,  
Hoc passionis tempore  
Piis adauge gratiam  
Reis que dele crimina.

Te, fons salutis, Trinitas,  
Collaudet omnis spiritus :  
Quibus crucis victoriam  
Largiris, adde præmium.

Instead of the more familiar version in English, of the *Vexilla Regis*, we select that of Dr. Neale, whose wonderful power of rendering the songs of the Church in word and spirit, seems almost like inspiration.

The Royal banners forward go,  
The cross shines forth with mystic glow ;  
Where He in flesh, our flesh who made,  
Our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

Where deep for us the spear was dyed,  
Life's torrent rushing from his side ;  
To wash us in the precious flood  
Where mingled water flowed and blood.

Fulfilled is all that David told  
In true prophetic song of old ;  
Amidst the nations, God, saith he,  
Hath reigned and triumphed from the Tree.

Oh, tree of beauty, tree of light !  
Oh, tree with royal purple dight !  
Elect upon whose faithful breast  
Those holy limbs should find their rest !

On whose dear arms, so widely flung,  
The weight of this world's ransom hung  
The price of humankind to pay  
And spoil the spoiler of his prey !

Oh, cross, our one reliance, hail !  
This holy passion-tide, avail  
To give fresh merit to the saint  
And pardon to the penitent.

To thee Eternal Three in One  
Let homage meet by all be done ;  
Whom by the cross thou dost restore,  
Preserve and govern evermore.

The last two stanzas of the hymn are of a later period. It is to this same time and author, and to the same or another fragment of the wood that we owe that other glorious hymn, the *Pange lingua glori-osi*, whose refrain has so moved the souls of men in

the solemn commemorations of Good Friday. A stanza will suffice here.

Pange lingua gloriosi  
Proelium certaminis,  
Et super crucis trophæo  
Dic triumphum nobilem  
Qualiter Redemptor orbis  
Immolatus vicerit.

Crux fidelis, inter omnes  
Arbor una nobilis ;  
Nulla silva talem profert,  
Fronde, flore, germine.  
Dulce lignum, dulces clavos,  
Dulce pondus sustinet.

Sing, my tongue, the Saviour's glory,  
Tell his triumph far and wide ;  
Tell aloud the famous story  
Of his body crucified.  
How upon the cross a victim  
Vanquishing in death, He died.

Faithful cross, oh tree all beauteous !  
Tree all peerless and divine !  
Not a grove on earth can show us  
Such a flower and leaf as thine.  
Sweet the nails and sweet the wood  
Laden with so sweet a load !

In a curious little book, published in Rome in 1609, entitled *DE PARTICULA EX PRETIOSO ET VIVIVICO LIGNO SACRATISSIMAE CRUCIS*, etc., by A. F. Angelo Rocca Camerte, an Augustin, who was prefect of the Apostolic treasury, we find an account of a fragment which was then in the treasury. This was supposed to be the same fragment for which Leo I. thanks Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, in one of his letters, about A.D. 450. This treatise is very interesting, the author describing various small fragments of the wood, and going at considerable length into the discussion of the nails, their number, etc., and the character of the wood, which, from such relics as he had seen, he believed, with Lipsius, to have been oak.

The history of Jerusalem and its sacred places and relics during the three centuries after Constantine is very obscure. What prayers were offered before that wood in those years, God only knows, before whom long ago the worshipers themselves have knelt for judgment. What tears have fallen on the rock of Jerusalem before the shrine of the cross in those days, they best know whose eyes shut on the griefs of life twelve centuries ago.

In the seventh century Jerusalem experienced a

succession of terrible changes. In the year 614 Chosroes, the Persian, descended upon Syria, and the first great event in the history of the wood was its capture by this monarch in that year. The repose of the relic in Jerusalem was disturbed by the approach of his host, swollen with volunteer Jews and Arabs, alike desirous to be revenged on the hated followers of Christ who had possession of the Holy City. Fresh from the conquest of Asia Minor, and eager to invade Egypt, the enemy came down through Galilee with resistless force, and threw themselves against the fortifications of Jerusalem.

That invasion must have been fierce beyond parallel. It was in vain for walls and gates to oppose the fierce onslaught. Forcing their way into the city, they carried rapine and destruction through the streets, which were not unused to similar scenes. Ninety thousand Christians fell fighting in the Holy City for the cross of Christ, and when the last defender was gone, the cross fell into the hands of the infidel foe.

I am tempted to pause a moment and relate one of those thousand legends which, founded perhaps on some small base of truth, have been built up around the story of this wood. I have no knowledge of its

origin, and can only relate it as I heard it, sitting, one sunny day, on the Mount of Olives, and listening to a friend whose talk abounded in such traditions. He was eloquent when he spoke of the Greek who fought last on the hill of Calvary for the wood of the cross. It was a pet subject with him. I wondered if he dreamed it. It sounds like a vision of the night.

That Greek was a giant, who appeared among the garrison of Jerusalem, unknown to all. He might well have been a descendant of those who fought with Leonidas; he was a fit predecessor to Richard. His sword was like the sword of Goliath. He had fought steadfastly all the day, and with his own arm he had slain a hundred of the rabble foe, Jew and Gentile alike. Wherever he appeared, the enemy fell like grain before the sickle. Retreating slowly, he had at last stationed himself at the door of the Chapel of the Cross, within which the priests were bowed in prayer, and here for a long time his single arm kept back a thousand of the enemy. Driven at length within the wall, he stood erect at the foot of the cross, now visible to the eyes of the foe, and when they had hewn the praying priests to the ground, he stood alone to fight for the wood of Christ's suffering. They shrank aghast from the visage that flashed through



his armor. His eye was like the eye of an angel. Lifting between his clasped hands the cross-hilt of his sword, he offered up a prayer to Him for whom he fought, and Christ sent down his angels to be with him in the conflict. In vain they pressed on him. One sweep of his strong arm cleared the circle around him, and the altar was ready for other victims. The night came down, and none could approach the cross, for the stout warrior, who, with God's help, yet guarded it; and when the gloom was too thick for foe to recognize foe, they left him there, alone, triumphant, to the company of God and the angels. In the morning he was gone, and on the floor of the chapel they counted of the slain by his hand twelve chiefs and forty-four of the stoutest soldiers of the guard of Chosroes. Men might well say it was Michael the Archangel himself.

Thus much of tradition. We follow veritable history.

The tide of battle rolled on westward and northward, breaking on the shores of the sea and losing itself in the sands of the Libyan desert. The reign of Persia extended from the pyramids to the unknown wastes of Scythia, and the victorious monarch retired beyond the Euphrates, bearing with him the True

Cross as one of the trophies of his conquests. It would appear that its preservation was due to the Christian wife of Chosroes.

Alas for Jerusalem! What a bloody "city of peace" she has been in all her long history! War, war forever in her walls. I doubt if so much blood has been poured out on any other city pavement from Babylon to Rome.

Jerusalem was more desolate now than it had been since the captivity of the Sons of Israel, when they were led away beyond the rivers of Babylon. The Church of the Resurrection was in ruins over the sepulchre of Christ, and the personal affliction of the inhabitants, great and terrible as it was, seemed nothing compared with the loss which the city and the Christian world had sustained in the capture of the True Cross. All the western world mourned the judgment of God, and for fourteen years ceased not to pray for the restoration of the object of their affection.

While the cross remained in the hands of the Eastern pagans, a new power began to arise, which was to control the destinies of the eastern world. The camel-driver of Mecca had become a prophet, and the children of Ishmael and Esau had begun to overrun the inheritance of Isaac and Jacob.

After ten years of battle, Heraclius, the Roman Emperor, on the plains of Nineveh, destroyed the Persian forces and recaptured the cross. The Emperor returned from the East, and as he approached Jerusalem, mindful of his own lowliness, compared with Him whose cross he was now carrying, dismounted, and bared his head and feet. Then, taking the wood on his own shoulders, as his Lord and master had taken it six hundred years before, he carried it toward Calvary. The gates of the city flew open on his approach, and the monarch carried his load to Calvary and deposited it in its ancient place. The day of the return of the cross was the feast day of the Exaltation of the Cross, and, commemorating both occurrences, is marked in the calendar of the Church, and remains to this day in the Roman and English Church calendars as Holy Cross Day. It was the 14th of September, A.D. 629.

But the repose of Jerusalem was forever ended. The Arabian power was rapidly increasing, and in the year 637, Jerusalem yielded to their armies, and Omar entered the city. With that toleration which has always marked the Moslem rule in Jerusalem, a special edict permitted the cross to remain in the possession and custody of the Christians in Jerusa-

lem, and pilgrims continued as before to throng all the avenues of approach to the city. But worship was carried on in a more quiet and unostentatious manner. Processions were interdicted, crosses were forbidden to be worn publicly by priests or laity, and bells were only permitted to be tolled. For four hundred years the caliphs governed Jerusalem, and the Holy Places remained in their hands.

The history of the cross and sepulchre under Moslem rule is the story of generation after generation of pilgrims who came to the Holy City, prayed at the tomb and the foot of Calvary, and sought graves in the dust of the valley of Jehoshaphat or on the hill-side of Aceldama. Millions of those who could tell the story of the cross in those years, lie silent around Jerusalem.

I was walking one afternoon on the slope of the hill of Evil Counsel, opposite the lower slope of Mount Moriah and Mount Zion, seeking among the countless tombs which perforate the rocks on that hill-side for some inscription or legend that might give a hint as to the occupants of these now deserted sleeping-places, when I found a small entrance to a tomb which has generally escaped observation, and has attracted but little notice. Descending into it,

with some little difficulty, I found a vaulted chamber in the rock of the mountain, from which various rooms and passages opened in three directions.

Lighting the candle, which an Eastern explorer always carries in his pocket, I penetrated these various rooms. In some I found only the ordinary rock-hewn couches, which I can best describe by likening them to the berths in a steamboat, in which lay, white and ghastly, the skeletons of the dead occupants, not to be awakened by my tread. Penetrating still deeper, however, I found rooms in which the dead lay in vast piles, heaps on heaps of bones, with the dry dust of decayed humanity, scattered among them. I can not estimate the number of the dead lying in this cavern. There were many hundreds, perhaps thousands. In one chamber I climbed to the top of the heap and crawled over it on my hands and knees, crushing deep at every step into the fragile mass, and here I thought to count the skulls that lay on the top. I tossed them one by one into a corner, and counted till I reached a hundred, and there was no visible diminution of the number. Then I stopped and left the dead in their dust, and came out to the fresh air on the hill-side, where the old wall of the temple shone in the red sunlight, and Mount Zion gleamed rugged and stern, but beautiful for situation, as of old.

Various reasons have since that time led me to think that the dead who were in this tomb may have been the pilgrims of the cross in the years to which this history has now led us. They may be of a much later period, and if so, then the dust of the pilgrims is elsewhere mingled with the dust of holy land.

The history of the four hundred years after Omar, could that dust speak, I should ask of it. From what homes they came no man may know. What heart, think you, beat under those skeletons? What sighs and prayers escaped those lips, none can tell. But we know who the pilgrims were. There were stout men from merrie England — merrie then, for those were days that begat Robin Hood and his men to be born a century later. There were cheerful ballad-singers from Provence, for Provence was then expecting Petrarch, though he came not for three hundred years. But Provence had then her Christian ballads, and the Rhone valley was melodious with their sound. There were flaxen-haired men from Norway and Sweden, brave hearts from the Rhine banks, and many young maidens and wives that came long journeys to the foot of the cross and found graves at Aceldama. Imagination fails to paint the events of one pilgrimage, fails utterly to follow one single aching heart from

its home in far lands through all the weary way between that home and the gates of the Holy City, much less those thousands who died without the walls, having never seen the cross they so longed to behold, nor pressed their foreheads to the rock of the sepulchre.

And they all believed in it. A long faith if a false one.

They all believed it. The history of those pilgrimages will never be written; but it is beyond question true that that piece of wood in Jerusalem now influenced the history of every nation in Europe, and guided the destiny of the human race. At this point, if our history were more than a sketch, we might follow various small fragments of the wood which were taken from Jerusalem, and thus show the streams of its influence flowing here and there and permeating European life, action, and history. It becomes a subject of wonderful interest. Let us take a single illustration, which shows how it may have had its influence, remote, but perceptible, on our own American language, history, and civilization—an influence dating back to this period before the Crusades.

The Norman Conquest of England shaped the whole future history of the English race. How that

conquest was affected by the religious sentiment of the period is matter of history. William the Norman extracted an oath from Harold, the last of the Saxon kings, which oath had a paralyzing effect on the Saxons, if it did not affect the counsels, and finally unnerve the arm of Harold himself at Hastings. The remarkable fact is recorded that when Harold took this oath he was shocked at the holy character of the relics exposed by William, on which he had made what he previously regarded as a mere trifling promise. What were these relics?

None was so highly venerated in that day as the True Cross. This we know by ample evidence. See what may have been the connection. Robert of Normandy, known as Robert II., father of William the Norman, made the pilgrimage on foot to Jerusalem. History does not tell us which of his numerous crimes he sought to expiate, whether the wrong he had done Arlotta, the furrier's daughter, of Falaise, in the year 1024, whence was born William the Norman, Bastard and Conqueror, or the poisoning of Richard, his brother, in 1028, whose throne he seized and occupied. But penitence came in 1035, tardy indeed, but, like slow penitence in most cases, terrible even to remorse when it did at length seize him,



and the stout knight fled apace to the sepulchre. On his return he died before reaching home ; but sent to France a piece of the True Cross, which was deposited in an abbey. It is at least possible, and when we remember Harold's great emotion at that time, it seems highly probable that the piece of the cross which Robert sent home was one of the relics on which his son William made Harold swear that oath which unnerved his arm and ensured the conquest of England by the Normans.

Similar influences can be traced on other European nations at this same period. But we pass on with the history of the chief fragment remaining in Jerusalem. At the beginning of the eleventh century, El Hakim, the fanatic caliph of Egypt, invaded Palestine and destroyed Jerusalem. The Church of the Resurrection was absolutely razed to the ground, but his attempt to burn the Holy Sepulchre failed, the rock resisting the fire. The cross was rescued from his hands and concealed by Christians in Jerusalem, and remained concealed from public gaze, but at times exposed to the eyes of the devout during the turbulent years that were now passing over the Holy City. El Hakim's conquest was in the year 1009. For ninety years the sufferings and wrongs of Christian

pilgrims were ten-fold increased, and then came the day of vengeance.

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### XIII.

#### THE KINGDOM OF JERUSALEM.

THE entire history of the first, second, and part of the third crusade belongs to the history of the cross. All over Europe oaths were taken upon its fragments to "take the cross" and redeem the Holy Land. The cross was the sign worn to distinguish the Crusader. Armies knelt when priests lifted the jeweled reliquaires which held these minute, but powerful relics, and the faith of the Christian world led to the rescue of the sacred wood. It remained in the hands of the Bishop of Jerusalem, concealed from infidel gaze, a mystery whose power was more feared by the Saracens than the armies of the Christians. This fear was abundantly shown by the later history of the wood when it fell into Moslem hands.

During the years which marked the approach of Godfrey and his valiant crusaders, it remained con-

ceased until that Friday morning, 13th July, 1099, when the white horseman appeared on the Mount of Olives, and the Christian hosts entered the breach, and Jerusalem was again freed from the infidel.

Of the fury of that combat, when Jerusalem fell into the crusaders' hands, no words can give any adequate idea. The Christians spared none of the infidels. Shrieks, cries, the clash of armor, the shouts of knights and their retainers, the wails of women—then as now in the East, thrilling, piercing wails—rent the sky with a hideous confusion of sounds which made the very atmosphere seem filled with ringing voices of despair or of fury. But suddenly from the very heart of the city a sound was heard that overpowered all other sounds. It was as the voice of an archangel, so sudden was the stillness that took possession of the city. Down the hillside of Zion, up the ascent of Moriah, along the crescent slope of Bezetha and Akra, swept a train of stoled priests, headed by Daimbert, the legate of the Pope, bearing the wood of the true cross for which they had fought, and which, safe and intact, they now beheld. Swords fell from the grasps of slayers. The carnage ceased. No sound was heard in the streets unless it were souls of Saracens and Christians escap-

ing through bubbling wounds. Stillness profound as that of a deserted city reigned, as for a little while the conquerors knelt, every man where he stood, in blood and mire, gazing with unutterable joy on the cross, which had been found in its secret place, and was now triumphantly shown to the victors.

Then, loud and clear and joyful, the full chant of the *Benedicite* sounded out, as the procession swept along, lifting the sacred wood high up over the carnage it had caused. The Saracens gasped as they saw it, and choked with impotent curses. The dying crusaders beheld it through the bloody films that gathered in their eyes, and smiled as they departed, murmuring the *Nunc Dimittis*. Bareheaded, unarmed, and chanting with the stoutest monk of them all, close behind the cross, followed Godfrey, first king that was to be, and Tancred, Raymond, and Eustace, Hugh de St. Paul, and Gaston de Bearn, and a host of other worthies, whose names live in history and song, proud followers of the cross whose freedom they had this day won. Never did setting sun go down on a sadder city or grander procession than when it went down that night on Jerusalem liberated.

Restored to its place on the rock of Calvary, the

cross was again the joy of the whole earth, during the brief sad history of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. One by one the kings of the Holy City died and were buried at its base. Godfrey first on the right, Baldwin on the left, lay down like brave knights by the sacred wood for which they had fought, and slept, as brave knights should, at the foot of the cross they had rescued.

Take here again one instance of its importance in European history. Perhaps the highest price ever paid for a fragment of it was paid to Baldwin I., by Sigurd, prince of Norway, known to fame as Sigurd the Crusader. He is one of those heroes of history that romance can not make more interesting than he appears in sober truth. Starting from Norway on an excursion after fame, the fair-haired boy of eighteen, at the head of ten thousand men, sailed into the Straits of Gibraltar. He passed a year of delight to himself and his followers in fighting the Saracens on the coasts of Spain and Morocco, doing deeds of valor that are recorded both in the Norwegian songs and the Latin Chronicles.

At length he arrived at the Holy Land, and went up to Jerusalem to purchase a piece of the true cross, and to accomplish his pilgrimage. Baldwin was in

want of naval assistance, and the young warrior was ready for battle. That, indeed, was his business and his pleasure. He willingly consented to join in an attack on the great city of Saida, or Sidon, then the strongest port on the Eastern Mediterranean, and having captured it, relinquished all his rights of conquest to Baldwin, accepting a fragment of the wood of the cross as his sole reward. The Norwegian chronicle says that King Baldwin and the Patriarch caused this splinter of the wood to be taken off, and on it "they both made oath that this wood was of the holy cross upon which God Himself had been tortured. Then this holy relic was given to King Sigurd, with the condition that he and twelve other men with him should swear to promote Christianity with all his power, and erect an archbishop's seat in Norway if he could, and also that the cross should be kept where the holy king Olaf reposed, and that he should introduce tithes and pay them himself."

Thus, by the wood of the cross, Christianity was founded firmly in Northern Europe. Many volumes would be necessary to trace the influences thence proceeding in all the later history of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Germany. Perhaps it was from this purchase by Sigurd that came a splinter of the wood

which lay on the breast of Dagmar, the "darling queen" of Denmark, when, in the year 1212, she, young and beautiful, was carried to her grave. The Danish legends say, that though she lay dead as they bore her toward the church, yet she awoke at the sound of the voice of her husband, King Valdemar, who came riding down the street and met the procession. And as in her life before, so now she begged of him mercy for the poor, the outlawed, the prisoners, and then slept again, and was buried with the jewel on her breast. Long after, her tomb was opened and the reliquaire taken out, and it is now in the museum in Copenhagen, prized by all Denmark as a precious relic, but more for the memory of the well-beloved Dagmar than for the splinter of wood supposed to be within it. The jewel itself, enameled in Byzantine style, with pictures of Christ and the Virgin Mother, St. John, Basilus, and Chrysostom, is in the form of a cross, and is, perhaps, the oldest known enameled cross. All Denmark knows it; and the King presented to the Princess Alexandra a facsimile of it on the occasion of her marriage with the Prince of Wales, in token of the trust of Denmark, remembering Dagmar, that she, too, would win such love and honor when Queen of England.

A hundred and eighty-seven years the kingdom of Jerusalem had existence, and then it became but a name, a sounding title annexed to western thrones. From year to year the history of the cross was the same. Broken hearts found consolation before the wood. Weary souls found refreshment before it. Tired men found rest at its foot.

If there is hallowed ground on the earth, it is the ground which human knees have pressed in prayer, which humble and sincere grief has sanctified with tears. Within the circuit of the walls of the Church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem there may be inclosed, perhaps, an acre of ground. The earth is the great historian. Its hills and rocks, its plains and seas are the memorials of great events. But could the history of that one acre of ground be written, its stories would be more strange and sad than those of any thousand other acres on the surface of the globe. Within the Holy Sepulchre itself the rocky floor is but six feet by two, a narrow strip, on which the visitors who stoop down to look in will sometimes see three or possibly four pilgrims kneeling with foreheads pressed on the low marble plate that covers the shelf whereon the body lay. That little piece of floor, those twelve square feet of rock, have a history



which will be told ages hence when other stories of this world's surface are forgotten with the ashes it will have gone to.

There millions of pilgrims have knelt, believing that there Mary knelt when they laid Him in the sepulchre, and threw her arms around his silent form in the last embrace; and that there his feet first touched the rock of the world He had redeemed when He awoke from the slumber of atonement. Whether their belief was true or not, there year by year, from the days of Constantine until this, the lowly and the great, slaves and emperors, men of all nations and all classes, brought their loads of sin and laid them down on that small floor. Near it, a few paces to the east, was the Rock of Calvary, where the wood of the cross was enshrined, and the devout knelt before it. He who prayed in Jerusalem knelt first at the cross and then at the tomb. Here the betrayer and the betrayed alike found consolation. Here the oppressor and the oppressed met on equal ground and with equal humility. Nor was it uncommon, in those days of which we now speak, for the knightly wrong-doer, coming conscience-driven to the cross, and the poor and lowly wronged, coming as well in meek contrition and shame, to meet face to

face on their knees, with the cross and its lessons of penitence and sacrifice before them.

From time to time in this, as in all periods of its history, the devotion of men to the wood inspired eloquence in sermon and in song, which became part of the literary treasures of the Church, and had and still have power. If the wood of the cross had never produced any other effect in the world than this, this alone would have made the history important and precious. There is something very holy in an old song of praise, which has expressed the devout emotions of men, and women, and children from age to age. We all cherish such songs. The *Pange Lingua* and the *Vexilla Regis* were the predecessors not only of the familiar translations known to us, but of such noble hymns as "When I survey the wondrous Cross," and many others of like power.

The poetic literature of the cross is abundant, and a small part of it would fill many pages of this volume. Adam of St. Victor, in the twelfth century, looking toward Jerusalem and the much-loved wood, now surrounded by the defenders of the kingdom and visited by many pilgrims, wrote the sequence, which Dr. Neale regards as his masterpiece, and which he translates in his *Mediæval Hymns*. We reproduce this translation here :

## LAUDES CRUCIS ATTOLLAMUS.

Be the Cross our theme and story,  
We who in the Cross's glory  
    Shall exult for evermore.  
By the Cross the warrior rises,  
By the Cross the foe despises,  
    Till he gains the heavenly shore.

Heavenward raise songs and praise :  
Saved from loss by the Cross,  
    Give the Cross his honor due.  
Life and voice keep well in chorus ;  
Then the melody sonorous  
    Shall make concord good and true.

Love be warm, and praise be fervent,  
Thou that art the Cross's servant,  
    And in that hast rest from strife :  
Every kindred, every nation,  
Hail the Tree that brings salvation,  
    Tree of Beauty, Tree of Life !

O how glorious, how transcendent  
Was this Altar ! how resplendent  
    In the life-blood of the Lamb !  
Of the Lamb Immaculate  
That redeemed our ancient state  
    From its sin and from its shame.

This the Ladder Jacob saw  
Whereby all things CHRIST shall draw  
    To Himself, both friends and foes :  
Who its nature hath expended  
In its limits comprehended  
    All the world's four quarters knows.

No new Sacraments we mention ;  
We devise no fresh invention :  
    This religion was of old ;  
Wood made sweet the bitter current :  
Wood called forth the rushing torrent  
    From the smitten rock that rolled.

No salvation for the mansion  
Where the Cross in meet expansion  
    On the door-post stood not graved ;  
Where it stood, the midnight blast  
Of the avenging Angel passed,  
    And the first-born child was saved.

Wood the widow's hands collected,  
When salvation unexpected  
    Came, the Prophet's mystic boon :  
Where the wood of faith is wanted,  
There the SPIRIT'S oil is scantied,  
    And the meal is wasted soon.

Rome beheld each armed vessel  
And Maxentius vainly wrestle

In the deep against its might :  
This procured the bright ovation  
O'er the Persian and the Thracian  
When Heraclius won the fight.

Types of old in Scripture hidden  
Setting forth the Cross, are bidden  
In these days to fuller light ;  
Kings are flying, foes are dying,  
On the Cross of CHRIST relying  
One a thousand puts to flight.

This its votaries still assureth,  
Victory evermore secureth,  
Weakness and diseases cureth,  
Triumphs o'er the powers of hell ;  
Satan's captives liberateth,  
Life in sinners renovateth,  
All in glory reinstateth  
Who by ancient Adam fell.

Tree, triumphal might possessing,  
Earth's salvation, crown, and blessing,  
Every other prætergressing  
Both in bloom and bud and flower ;  
Medicine of the Christian spirit,  
Save the just, give sinners merit,  
Who dost might for deeds inherit  
Overpassing human power.

The kingdom of Jerusalem fell. Once we read that the cross was carried to the gate of the city with Baldwin and his army when they went down to meet the Saracens at Askelon, and one chronicler relates that the wood was actually carried to that battle-field, where the crusaders triumphed. The better opinion would seem to be that it never left the Holy City until that day when, the kingdom being in danger, Guy of Lusignan, last king of Jerusalem, brought it to the plain of Galilee to rally the drooping spirits of his soldiery, and lost it with his kingdom.

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#### XIV.

#### THE CROSS IS LOST.

No scene in history is more profoundly solemn and sad than is that presented by the council of knights which Guy, last King of Jerusalem, called together in the camp at Sephouri, on July 1, 1187, when the Christian army were gathered for the last struggle with Saladin.

The days of Godfrey, Tancred, and the soldiers of old time were gone by. Godfrey had finished work, and lain down, on the right-hand side, close as grave

could well be cut in the stone, at the foot of the rock of Calvary. A little later Baldwin, his successor, took his sleep near by, on the left-hand side, and the two dead knights reposed in peace till an enemy tore them out of their graves, and scattered their dust to become part and parcel of holy land. The defense of cross and sepulchre had ceased to be, either to king or knight, of any importance compared with the defense of possessions and power. Dissensions, jealousies, enmities, all the ordinary consequences of greed, ambition, avarice, and pride, had weakened the kingdom. The old faith was dead. The cross was enshrined in a golden case, blazing with jewels, but the defenders thought more of the gold and the jewels than of the wood within, or the Lord of whose death it was the memorial. Men were seeking personal advantage, utterly oblivious of honor, honesty, or duty; women, even to the queen herself, had abandoned ordinary respect for virtue, and the court at Jerusalem was vile in the eyes of men and of God.

In the midst of this universal degradation, a few knights remained, whose lives shine out conspicuous amid the gloomy surroundings. These were men of the grand old mould, in which Godfrey and Tancred and their brothers in arms were cast.

Had there been, on the part of the Christian knights, any respect for oaths or knightly honor, the kingdom might have been prosperous, and the land at peace. But the sum of their iniquities was complete, and the Saracen Sultan, wearied with their repeated violations of faith, had assembled his forces to the terror of all Palestine.

Raymond, Count of Tripoli, nearer, perhaps, than any other knight, to the old type, had been on the worst possible terms with Guy. His castle of Tiberias, on the shore of the sea of Galilee, only a few miles distant from Sephouri, was now beleaguered by the Saracens in full force. His wife was in the castle, surrounded by the enemy, who had carried the city, but were held at bay by the defenders of the citadel. Raymond had been at actual war with Guy, himself indeed a claimant of the throne to which Guy had come in a way not very honorable; but on this occasion of such terrible importance to the Christian cause, he had thrown aside all personal animosity, left his wife and castle surrounded by the enemy, and joined the army of the Cross at Sephouri. But the Grand Master of the Templars, and the larger portion of the knights, who formed the miserable support of Guy's tottering throne, less noble than Raymond, re-



tained their bitter feeling toward him, and by personal influence with the weak king, overcame the force of his wise counsels. The end was at hand, and some foresaw it with Raymond, yet determined to fight that last battle as brave men, true to God and kingdom. The question submitted to the council was whether the Christians should march out from the hill country, across the hot plain, destitute of water, attack the Saracens, and relieve Tiberias, or whether prudence required them to remain in their position, permit the fall of Tiberias, and await a more favorable opportunity for the decisive battle. Raymond, whose personal interests were in Tiberias, nobly laid them down, saying, in the old knightly style, that he could easily win back his castle, and rescue his wife from captivity, but that the kingdom once lost, all was lost.

The scene of the events now about to occur was full of interest, and full of warning. But a little way from them, to the southward, was the plain of Esdraelon, the battle-ground on which, in ancient wars, the judgments of God had been executed. Across the valley Guy might see the village of Endor, where Saul, in just such distress as his own, had sought counsel of the dead prophet, and obtained no com-

fort. Beyond were the mountains of Gilboa, gloomy with terrible warning to the recreant King of Jerusalem. Lebanon towered above them to the northward, and away in the north-east the snowy summit of Hermon pierced the sky.

To the eastward stretched the broad plain which lies between the last slopes of the Lebanon hills and the blue sea of Galilee, and on this plain, the low hill of Hattin was then, as now, supposed to be the Mount of the Beatitudes. Thence there was no comfort to be derived, but rather terror, for there was no one of the blessings there pronounced to which the Christian knights could lay claim, no one which they had not specifically forfeited by innumerable sins.

In the center of the camp was the wood of the cross. Thinking to revive the fainting courage of his soldiers, Guy had persuaded the Patriarch to send it from Jerusalem to Galilee, in charge of the Bishop of Ptolemais (Acre), and the Bishop of St. George (Lydda). The council was fierce and angry. The Grand Master boldly charged Raymond with treason and denounced his advice as intended for ill.

In the night, the Grand Master persuaded Guy to reject the wise counsel of his ablest advisers, and decide upon leading out his army to meet Saladin.

The scene, in a moral view, was one of the most remarkable in history.

The two armies, encamped within a few miles of each other, and about to engage in battle, were the representatives of two faiths. The one, the army of Islam, imbued with vigorous, living, enthusiastic faith in the camel-driver of Mecca; the other, the army of the Cross, having scarce enough of the ancient faith to entitle them to the Christian name; looking to the wood with a superstitious hope that it might have some virtue, but utterly oblivious now of Him whose death for their salvation it typified.

The leaders of the two armies presented a terrible contrast in character. The religion of the cross was not responsible for the shame of the one, who was a worthless king and a perjured knight, nor was Islam to be credited with the nobleness of the other. Guy was an exceptional disgrace to Christianity. Saladin was an exceptional glory to Mohammedanism.

The greatest soldier and the purest monarch of his age, a man the like of whom has been rarely known in this world, was Yusef Salah-ed-Din, or as his name is now commonly written, Saladin. A devout Mohammedan, constant in prayer, brilliant in feats of arms, the soul of honor, accustomed to victory but

always self-restrained, stern and tremendous in battle, but gentle and pitiful as a woman to the conquered, unrelenting in justice but merciful beyond prudence, ever ready to forgive injuries even the most foul, true as truth, I know no more resplendent character among the heroes of history.

Scenes in his life are full of poetic beauty. His ever open hand and purse, filled again and again with the spoils of conquest, were emptied in charity. A Christian mother whose babe had been seized by a Saracen and carried into the hostile camp, rushed in frenzy across the lines and made the air ring with her wails. Saladin heard her, called her to him, found the child, paid the ransom to his soldier, and sent the mother back rejoicing and safe. When Jerusalem fell into his hands (November, 1187), the terms of the capitulation were fixed that the Christians should pay ten dinars ransom for every man, five for every woman, and two for every child, and those who could not pay should be prisoners and slaves to the conquerors.

The clemency of Saladin was unparalleled. He discharged free large numbers unsolicited. Then two of his generals obtained the liberty of 1,500 Armenians, alleging that they were their countrymen, and

only pilgrims. Thousands of poor Christians remained unransomed, of whom many were women and children. Seif-ed-Din, brother of the Sultan, said to him, "I have fought well; give me a thousand slaves." "What will you do with them?" said the Sultan. "What I see fit." The Sultan approved his brother's intent, gave him a thousand, and they were at once set free. Then the patriarch went to him, and the Sultan gave him seven hundred; and to another who begged them, five hundred more, all of whom went free. "Now I will give my own gift of charity," said Saladin; and opening the gates, he directed that all the poor, known absolutely to be too poor to pay the ransom, should have free egress till sunset, and thousands thus went out free.

Then he opened his purse and poured out actual wealth on the widows and orphans of the Christian knights that he had slain in battle. And when the great companies of the Christians went to the part of the land still in Christian possession, he sent troops with them, charged to take such care of the sick and feeble, that these Saracens, imbued with the spirit of their leader, put the women on their horses, and walked, carrying the children in their arms. It was not strange that when he died the mourning of the

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Moslems in Damascus was greater than before or since for any other Sultan or Khalif. The account of his death, given by Ben-Sjeddadi, his biographer, who was with him to the end, is exceedingly simple and touching. Lying in the delirium of fever, as the last night wore on, his faithful physician, who, says the historian, remained by his side to direct, if it might be, his wandering mind toward God, read aloud now and then passages from the Koran. Toward morning, as Abou-Sjafarus read the words, "He is God, and beside Him there is none other," the face of the dying monarch grew resplendent, he murmured, "It is most true," and so died. Abulfeda says, "He left in his treasury nothing save forty-seven pieces of silver money and one piece of Tyrian gold, out of all the spoils of Egypt, Syria, the Eastern regions, and Arabia Felix; so great had been his liberality. He transmitted neither house nor land to any heir." Such was the leader of the Saracens, who, as his name, Salah-ed-Din, implies, was the hope of the religion, the "Defender of the Faith."

This brief digression to outline the character of the great Sultan who wrested the cross and sepulchre from the Christians, is not wholly out of place in the history of that wood. We have already said that no faith is

contemptible; that faith in falsehood is a power. The triumphs of the cross had been triumphs of faith. By faith Godfrey had hewn his path to the door of the Holy Sepulchre, and redeemed the memorials of the passion of his Lord. Now holy faith was dead in the hearts of the followers of Christ, and their uncertain counsels and feeble arms were opposed to the Soldan whose life was a long illustration of his faith in One God and Mohammed as his apostle, and to the united faith of his followers in the same creed. The *Deus vult* of the crusaders was no longer uttered with one voice from hearts beating as one. The *Allah Klbur* of the Saracens was the utterance of faith that was firm unto death. And firm faith in the camel-driver of Mecca triumphed over feeble faith in the cross and in Him who had died upon it. There is therefore a great interest in this connection in the character of the descendant of Abraham, whom God selected as his instrument to bring about the final accomplishment of the tardy blessing of Isaac bestowed on Esau.

Yielding to the advice of the Grand Master of the Templars, Guý moved his army from the hill country out on the plain of Hattin, and Saladin advanced from the sea-shore to meet him.

The warnings of Raymond were found to have been wise. The heat was terrible. There was no water. The Saracens held all the positions. The battle commenced on the 4th day of July, and lasted, with varying fortune, through the day. Saladin, with eighty thousand men, made desperate attacks on the Christian hosts. One charge of twenty thousand horsemen, led by the Sultan in person, is one of the most terrible in military history.

Saladin himself observed the vast power of the Cross, around which he saw the Christians gathered in their strongest array, and remarked, as an Arabian historian records, that they rallied around it with the utmost bravery, "as if they believed it their greatest blessing, strongest bond of union, and surest defense." Night came down on the battle-field, while its fate was undecided. The morning of July 5th broke terribly. It was very hot, and the Saracens set fire to the grass and brush, from which the strong khamseen wind blew flames and smoke into the Christian hosts, blinding and suffocating them. The plain of Hattin became a very hell, where, as an old chronicler says, "the sons of Heaven and the children of fire fought their great battle." And now, in the hour of their agony, somewhat of the old valor seemed to re-



turn to them, and templars vied with knights of St. John in valiant deeds around the cross. Saladin directed his heaviest forces toward the capture of the wood, for he believed that so long as it remained in Christian hands, so long their arms would continue strong, their courage and determination invincible. Slowly, as the day wore on, the lines closed in on the diminishing numbers of the Christians, until the fight thickened around a slight eminence on which the cross was upheld in the center of the Christian host.

Geoffrey of Lusignan, the gallant brother of the king (the one who had laughed gaily when told of Guy's elevation to the throne, and said: "What, make Guy a king! If they only knew me they would make a god of me!") Geoffrey, and Raymond, and Renaud of Sidon, and other knights, still kept other parts of the field. Whether Guy was captured or slain no one cared. The cross was once more the object of their dying devotion, and around the cross thousands poured out their lives, until the last man fell, and the Saracen seized the talisman. Who that last man was we can not tell, may never know, unless, perhaps, his last utterances be kept in the golden vials of the elders. Whoever he was, he is worthy to be looked at for an instant, standing in blood and

mire over the holy wood, crushing, with mace and battle-axe, the crowding heads of the infidels. He was the last of millions to die for that blind old faith and he was a worthy type of the innumerable host that had gone before him. Never after were such men known among the sons of Adam.

So on the fifth day of July, 1187, the cross was lost on the field of Hattin. It was never again in the possession of Christians. The Saracens rejoiced greatly over the splendor of the gold and jewels which encased it, and Saladin was wise enough to fear that in the hands of his enemies the old wood might be worth more than treasures of gold, and carefully kept it.

Very soon after, an attempt was made by the Christians to cast discredit on the wood in the possession of the Saracens. A Knight Templar declared to Henry of Champagne that during the battle he had buried the cross on the field, and marked the spot. Search was made, but no cross was found. There was no reason to doubt its fate. A few years later this was perfectly settled.

The victory of Saladin was complete. King, templars, knights, almost the entire Christian host, were his captives. He pursued his victory to the besieg-

ing and capitulation of Jerusalem, and thus put an end to the kingdom which Godfrey had founded.

Europe rang with wails of agony when the terrible news that the cross was lost reached her people. Richard, the stout-hearted, armed himself, and went to regain it. How the great men of Europe thronged to the Holy Land; how they fought with the princely Saladin; how Richard's stout arm did valiantly at Askelon and at Jaffa; how a truce was concluded with the Soldan for a term of years—all this is known. From the repeated efforts made by Richard, between 1190 and 1192, to purchase the cross from Saladin, and his refusal of any price for it, it is manifest that the latter possessed it, and regarded it as of great importance to keep the talisman of the Christians in his possession. At the siege of Acre, in 1190, the Sultan offered to give up the cross as part of the terms agreed on, but the Christians failed to fulfill their promises, and did not recover it. From time to time, in the years 1191 and 1192, we hear of it, as in the possession of Saladin, in Jerusalem. After the truce was concluded, Geoffrey de Vinsauf (in the *Itinerary of Richard*) states that some of the English crusaders who went to Jerusalem were permitted by the Sultan to see and kiss the cross.

Two different bodies of pilgrims thus saw it, the Bishop of Salisbury being of the number.

Then it disappeared. Of its fate no man knows anything. History and romance are suddenly quiet on the theme and the True Cross became a memory. A century later, a patriarch in Jerusalem professed to have found it, but no one seems to have had faith in his discovery. Three hundred years later, about the time when America was discovered, the Christians of Constantinople claimed to have the wood, and those of Cyprus to possess the cross of the Penitent Thief. But their claims were disputed, and soon forgotten. From that sad day on the plain of Galilee there has not been in Christian hands a cross for which there was faith enough to fight, except in wordy wars, and the old wood which Helena found, and which blood and tears sanctified, Saladin destroyed or hid, and it is doubtless long ago dust of the dust of Jerusalem.

It became the burden of story and song. In lordly halls of Europe for centuries after that, men bowed in humble adoration before those fragments of the wood which pilgrims had carried home from Holy Land. Many sad mourners found consolation before them. Many a joyful girl clasped her arms around the lover who had sworn faith on such a fragment.

In silent crypts under cathedral piles many kings lay in dust with hands clasped closely together on jeweled reliquaires holding the sacred wood.

For centuries, when the hall fire blazed high in castles where the Rhone rushed to the sea, and flashed its light on old armor that had done brave duty in the sacred wars, lord and lady, retainers and servants, sat or stood in silent entrancement while the minstrel swept his hand over the harp and woke its sounds to illustrate brave deeds done in Holy Land for Holy Cross. Nearly seven hundred years have elapsed since the battle of Hattin was fought on the plain of Galilee, and the wood, which had been such a power in the world, has passed forever out of the wars and councils of men. And the ages have changed, and men have changed, and Islam, the religion of Mohammed, has for fifty years past been propagated by the swords of the people, who for that seven hundred years have been praying daily to be delivered from it.

## XIV.

### CUI BONO?

I VENTURE to hope that what has been written will serve to show the historical importance of the wood of the cross.

And if any one ask, What is the good of this story now? it would be sufficient answer to say that no history could be more valuable as history.

But there is other good to be derived from an unprejudiced examination of the faith and works of the men of those old ages.

We will not stop now to discuss, what perhaps we can never know, whether in those times, as compared with our times, the sum of human happiness was greater or less, or whether a larger or smaller proportion of men, calling themselves Christian, prevailed to reach the desired rest.

The debt which we owe to the "dark ages," in the careful preservation from oblivion of a vast portion of ancient literature, is abundantly acknowledged. Not so fully, however, is the debt recognized which we owe to the men before the Reformation for much

of our religious instruction. There were a great many good men and women in those times, and their influence was felt in and after the Reformation. There is not space here to enter fully into this subject; but I think a single illustration will be interesting, especially as it is one not hitherto brought to public notice.

All intelligent readers are aware of the great value of picture-illustration. I think it may be safely affirmed that all who are taught Bible history in childhood derive more lasting impressions from pictures than from reading. The influence exerted by a picture which is widely circulated, is ten-fold that of the ablest commentator.

Immediately after the invention of printing in the fifteenth century, the Bible was published in various languages and dialects of Europe, and as the invention of wood engraving had preceded that of printing only a short time, the two arts went hand in hand. The art of wood engraving was apparently due to the desire of the monks and priests to accompany religious instruction with illustration. And here comes in one of the most interesting facts in the history of illustration; that is, the history of illustrating published thought by accompanying pictures.

In Cologne, between the years 1470 and 1475, was published a Bible (which, as well as most of the others to which I shall refer, I have before me now).

This Bible, a large folio, in the dialect of Cologne, was thoroughly illustrated with large wood-cuts, the work of an unknown artist, but one whose power was great for the time, although his pictures are in that quaint old style which characterized the early period until Durer. This old artist worked, I doubt not, in that pious spirit which sanctified so much of the art of that and the next century. He must have been imbued with all the peculiar faith which the history of the cross indicates; and, I have no hesitation in saying, he exerted a wider influence on the entire European world and our own times, by some of his queer old pictures, than any other man who has in any age attempted to illustrate the Bible. The evidence of this is very plain, and will, I am aware, be a surprise to many who have some familiarity with the subject. When Koburger published his great illustrated German Bible in Nuremberg in 1483, he obtained from Cologne the wood-blocks of this old artist and used them. In Holland, when the famous Halberstadt Bible was published in 1520-23, they secured these same cuts and used them for that edition. I do not



know what other service the original blocks performed, but my own library shows thus much of their influence in Germany and the Netherlands. But this was only a beginning of the teachings of this old artist. In the latter part of the fifteenth century illustrated Bibles were published in Venice, and the Italian artists, feeling the simple power of this Cologne artist, reproduced his designs, and they remained always after that the "stock designs," if I may be pardoned the expression, which were used by publishers of Bibles in Italy, intermingled with other original work.

Early in the sixteenth century, Lyons, in France, became the chief place of publication of illustrated Bibles. It is probable that a Venice printer, removing to Lyons, carried with him the wood-blocks which had been used in Venice, and thus introduced the designs to Lyons printers. New artists executed new pictures, but still many of the Cologne designs remained favorites. Edition after edition of the Bible appeared with them. They were varied in execution, slightly altered in accessories, but the design remained the same. They appear in many Lyons Bibles, down to 1540. In 1521, a Bible published by Sacon for Koburger, contained many of

them, redrawn with great skill, but with identical composition, probably by Hans Springinklee; and from this Bible many were copied, some with, some without improvement, in the famous *Icones Vcteris Testamenti*, first published in 1538, which are commonly attributed to Hans Holbein, but which are certainly not by him, unless he was a mere copyist; for a large proportion of the *Icones* are mere copies of pictures which had appeared in very many Bibles in many countries, before Holbein was born, and long before the publication of the first edition of the *Icones*. Nor was the end of the old Cologne artist's influence here. The Lyons Bibles gave the material for illustration to a long series of French Bibles. Froschover, in Zurich, published his splendid Bible of 1545, with the *Icones* and other illustrations. German Bibles used the same designs of the unknown Cologne artist. Bible illustrations, not in Bibles, but separate publications, continually appeared, and the same old designs pervaded the history of Bible illustration down to the present day. I think it perfectly safe to say that that old Cologne artist, a man of the sort that the dark ages produced, has instructed millions of his fellow-men in Bible history, giving them more fixed and permanent ideas on

the subject than all the commentators since his day, and sound orthodox ideas too.

This illustration may suffice to show that modern religious teaching and thinking owe something to the old times. But there are more important lessons than this to be learned from the study of the history of human faith in the wood of the cross.

The men who believed in it were not all fools. The age in which we live is not in all respects better or brighter than the ages that are past. I am not sure that the Christianity of the Church in the fourth century was any less enlightened, that it was any more superstitious, than the Christianity of our own times. I am even inclined to think that a man might believe in the wood of the cross, love it, venerate it, give his life for it, and at the same time believe in Him who died on the cross, love Him, and be faithful unto death in that love, as well as we who have no wood of cross to think of.

Nay, more. We live in a cold, incredulous age, in which men, calling themselves Christian, look with self-righteous contempt on the Christians of what are called the dark ages, and thank God they in these days are not like the men of those days. But the Church and the world might be better if there were more such men now.

The Protestant Church has suffered terrible loss because of the idea, which is sedulously inculcated by many who ought to know better, that the modern Church, since the reformation, is in some sort a new Church, and that all which preceded it in Church history, from apostolic times, was debased, full of error and falsehood, unworthy of study, and, if possible, to be forgotten. In the cultivation of this notion the entire body of Church history is consigned to the Greek and Roman Churches as a mass of tradition, error, and fabrication. We have lost the lives of many martyrs, priceless treasures of example, the noblest histories of human faith and endurance, and lost them because other Churches have called them saints and made them intercessors. We have lost invaluable pages of Church history full of instruction—pages as trustworthy as those of Herodotus and Tacitus—because of an insane idea that these old historians belonged to Churches that were repudiated in the sixteenth century.

But we have lost yet more. In our rigid opposition to relics and relic-worship, in our laudable efforts to substitute spiritual for formal services, we have lost a great deal of the spirit of reverence for holy things.

Surely there is something very solemn and very beautiful in the repose to which the early Christians of Rome, the men, and women, and children baptized by Peter and Paul, were carried when they slept in peace. Eighteen hundred years have gone by, and they rest in their tombs, and men go now and pray in the little chapels among them, where husbands and lovers, wives and children prayed by the dead before and after hiding them out of sight.

Even the Moslems regard the burial-places of their dead with veneration, and never wittingly disturb their repose. Stamboul has grown a thousand years around the cemeteries, shaded with dense masses of cypress trees.

We do not so care for our dead. I said we had lost reverence for holy things. The dead are holy.

It is not difficult to point out more than one graveyard, where the old folk and young folk of generations past were laid to rest with many tears, where the sound of the wind through the pine-trees and the long grass was very musical and very solemn, so that when one who was weary leaned over the fence and looked on the low mounds, he could think, not unpleasantly, of lying down there some day himself. Over those graves the blessed words of hope in the

resurrection had been said. Silent, peaceful family groups were there, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, gathered to the dust that death always sanctifies. But through one of those acres of God's earth a railway line carries the rush of modern travel, with shrieks and whistles of engines, and another, and another, and another are utterly laid waste, such dust as could be found, carried away in boxes in strange confusion, and warehouses or factories built with their foundations in the unrecovered ashes of the ancestral dead. It is rank barbarism that does all this; and it is done because the age lacks the spirit of reverence.

No man now can look out a "snug place to lie" with any certainty that he will find his bones again when he seeks them. Surely the world is large enough to make this barbarism unnecessary. It will take but a short arithmetical calculation to show how very small a portion of the earth's surface would be necessary to give all the human race of all the ages such burial as would leave each one ample room to rest undisturbed. Why, then, the desecration?

We have not much reverence for old churches. Old churches are holy, if but for the memory of prayer. If not on earth, there are in heaven some

who remember with joy those old churches. How many in the city of New York are now occupied as stables, shops, factories, theaters? How many in other cities, and even in villages?

We have not much reverence for any church, old or new. Every church is, or should be, holy. On week-day or Sunday, in time of service or at other times, it should be entered reverently; and lessons of reverence taught here will be practiced elsewhere. The boy who is taught to take off his cap reverently as he enters the church-door, and not to put it on till he is again in the porch, will be a better boy, and learn a lesson of reverence which will accompany him in other scenes of life. The man or the family who think it as disrespectful to come late to the services of the church, without excuse, as to go late to a dinner, will be found to practice courteous rules of conduct with one another, and in social life; for reverence breeds courtesy.

Lack of reverence for the place of worship is the underlying reason why so many go to church to see and be seen, and why the persons in the church are often more the subject of thought and observation than the ceremonies of the church. And this is greatly due to a prevailing notion that reverence for

the church and its services is formalism, or superstition.

In our very proper desire to be rid of that which is mere form in worship, and destitute of life and spirit, too many are sweeping in their denunciation of all forms. It must not be forgotten that form is so essential to devotion that no one has yet been able to divest himself of the necessity of using more or less in acts of worship. The Friends, most rigid opponents of unmeaning rites and ceremonies, sit in formal meetings, wear formal dresses, and are otherwise formalists. Kneeling in prayer is a universal formality.

Ordinary social life—the pleasant relations of men to their fellow-men—are sustained by formalities. Formal addresses in correspondence, the established customs of intercourse, hand-taking, bowing with more or less formality to acquaintances, friends, ladies or gentlemen, the ordinary rules of social life, the outward show of respect to courts and authorities, all are forms, and without more or less of them civilization could not exist. It is needless to argue from the conceded propriety of these forms, that there is no impropriety in a reverential observance of more or less formality in the approach of man to



God. Forms are so necessary that liturgical worship is in use by all Christians of all denominations except only the Friends. This is more or less full, invariable, formal, and rubrical in different denominations. But the most formal style of liturgical worship is in use in all denominations, where not only the words of prayer and praise are printed for use, but they are arranged in rhythmical order, with rhyming terminations, are set to musical notes, and sung aloud in unison by the whole body of worshipers, sometimes led by a choir and accompanied by musical instruments. This is the acme of formality in worship, as practiced in the old Hebrew temple and by the Christian Church from a very early period. The use of rhyming passages was an introduction during the ages called dark, and was not then common, but it commended itself to the taste of Protestantism, and to it we owe the great body of eloquent, passionate song in which the Christian heart of our own time pours out its deepest and holiest emotions.

This is quite sufficient reason for caution and moderation on the part of those who condemn liturgical worship, and who wonder at the reverence with which Christians of some names regard the liturgies and formalities of their church service. While Protest-

ants differ in this respect as to some parts of formal church service, I doubt whether there is an English-speaking Protestant Christian of any name who could hear, without a shock of pain, a ribald parody, or other ridicule, of that portion of all Protestant liturgies in all the churches which commences with the words, "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," or that other passage which begins, "Jesus, Lover of my Soul." I have styled them passages from liturgical services, for such they are. All hymns used in public worship are liturgical in every sense, and as such we all agree in using them.

It is plain from this that the importance of reverence for some formalities in church service is recognized by all good people. There is no real difference of opinion about this, however much people may think they differ. The danger is, that in zealous condemnation of forms and ceremonies, the spirit of reverence may be wholly extinguished. Who shall decide, for his fellows, just how much formality is useful and suited to every one's devotional exercise? Let us be tolerant, lest, from our denunciations of all formalities, men argue that they need not show any outward respect to God, or to his ordinances.

I am not to be understood as teaching or as oppos-

ing what is now called ritualism. I do not know what it is, and I have never been able to find any one who could draw the line beyond which is ritualism. There are practices and formalities in church decoration and church worship which are classed as ritualistic, which are, to my tastes and limited knowledge, very absurd. A great deal of so-called Ritualistic art, which is seen in England and in America, used in church services and symbols, does not assist some worshipers in devotional feeling, because they happen to know that instead of being a reproduction of early Christian symbolic art, they are drawn out from the obscurity and semi-oblivion which should have been mercifully left to cover later periods of art ignorance, and debasement. Church inscriptions abound in forms of the alphabet which were used when most men did not know how to read or write. Notably a very large portion of modern church decoration in all denominations is Saracenic in origin and character, and suggests to the mind of the worshiper associations with Mohammed and his followers, or with Ali and the Metawali.

To be a thorough-going and consistent "ritualist," as some understand the word, calls in our day for a great deal more critical knowledge of the general his

tory of art than is imagined, and some symbolic devices in churches inevitably provoke smiles from the educated, as showing the errors of "ecclesiologists."

But however absurd these errors, they do not justify irreverent regard for the Church or for the services in which they occur. Aside from these manifest blunders, there are forms in all Churches, of all denominations, and in some these forms are carried to a greater extent than in others; but however offensive to the tastes or the judgment of some of us these may be, it becomes us to be very careful in judging others, lest we be judged ourselves.

For example: I went back not long ago, after nearly a half century of wandering, to the up-country village where I was born, and to that old Presbyterian church in which I was baptized, where the faith once committed to the saints was, in those days, kept by noble old Scotch Christians, elders of the Church, giants in frame and faith, whose memory is as precious as the memory of those of ancient time whom they have gone to join, and where, in a new and stately building, fitly decorated as the House of God, the same faith is now preached and prayer goes up as of old. It was a peaceful summer Sunday morning, and on the communion table before the pulpit

was a vase of fresh and glorious flowers, filling the great building with delicious perfume, and leading every devout mind to the thought that this was the most fitting of all decorations and offerings among the simple forms of morning prayer. I know that the stout old elder on whose lap I remember many a time sitting in childhood, and the mighty Scotch divine, who was a neighboring pastor, often conducting the services in that church, would have had more than hesitation in their day in permitting that perfume; for they would have been unable to see exactly the difference between the odor of the summer blossoms and the sweet incense from a golden censer. I am sure that the venerable Scotch pastor, grand old Christian, stern yet lovely, a man among men of his day, like Godfrey among the Crusaders, I know that he would have thundered in his broadest Scotch dialect, "You might as well put a gay cloth on the table and set candles on it and call it an altar."

I am not quite clear myself, even in these days of greater enlightenment, that they were not correct, so far as this, that the flowers and the altar-cloths, the incense and the candles, all originate in the same idea. The custom of using flowers for church decoration in Sunday services is widespread, and many

Churches, of various denominations, make provision for it as regularly as for the services. They mean something or mean nothing. They are not designed merely for people to look at. They are beyond question intended as decorative accompaniments of worship. We all like the flowers, but we do not all like the decorative and symbolic altar-cloths and vestments.

Let us not give up the flowers. They are pure, comely, fitting parts of that service of praise in which "mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars," "young men and maidens, old men and children," unite. Their use is one of the most beautiful acts of reverence for the house of God and the services of the Church, and tends to increase the affection and respect of young and old for the Church and the forms of Church worship.

It is very difficult to judge others in such matters without condemning ourselves; but whatever our judgment, it is plain enough that we all claim respect for such forms of religious worship as we ourselves approve and practice; and the lesson of reverence which needs most to be taught in our times, would be thoroughly learned if, in our judgment of our fellow-Christians, we put into thorough practical use

the golden rule of doing to others as we would have others do to us.

He who practices the formality of kneeling in prayer, should not be so self-righteous as to criticise Daniel or any one else for opening his windows toward Jerusalem before he kneels.

Those errors of formalists, which are hindrances instead of helps to devotion, will not be corrected by ridiculing them. If they are helps to those who use them, it illy becomes us, who cling to our own favorite formalities, to set ourselves up as their judges, especially when in so doing we encourage general irreverence for religious observances. If I could persuade a Mohammedan to substitute Jesus Ben-Mariam for Mohammed in his prayers, I would be quite content that he should adhere to his fixed hours of devotion and to the ablutions and postures which to him express his sense of humility.

The men of the early Christian ages are not to be despised because they carried their spirit of reverence to such an extent that they assembled for prayer at the graves of the martyrs, and turned their faces with loving veneration toward a piece of wood which they believed to be the cross. It is very easy to ridicule their proneness to submit to all sorts of impostures,

but it is not so easy to imitate the fervency of their faith in Him who died on the cross. The men of the middle ages are not to be despised because they thought so much of that wood that they made long, sad pilgrimages to pray at its foot, and left all to fight and die for it. It is easy to sit at home and laugh at zealots, but it is not easy to find men in this age of the world ready to defend their faith, and their brethren holding the same faith, against the oppressions of the Turk.

Let us remember always that there was no earthly advantage, no plunder of rich cities, for which those armies went to the Holy Land. They fought for no earthly crown, but only for the kingdom of Heaven. It may be an instructive lesson to compare them, marching through unknown countries, through much difficulty, in pain, trouble, well-nigh despair, fighting their way, battle-axe in hand, to the gates of Jerusalem, for the love of Christ, as soldiers bearing the cross, with a mass meeting of modern European Christians assembled in vociferous council to vote that the commercial interests of Europe demand the preservation of the Mohammedan power as a barrier to the encroachments of Christian powers on one another, and then going to church to pray



in Latin, “*Ut Turcarum et hereticorum conatus reprimere, et ad nihilum redigere digneris;*” or in plain English, to be delivered from the wiles of Turks and heretics.

If the old reverence for sacred things begat superstition in faith, is it not just possible that the modern want of reverence begets coldness to absolute frigidity in faith? There is a golden mean between the two extremes, and I am persuaded that a study of such histories as this which I have sketched will not lead any one to the superstition, but may help toward that mean. If it leads to reverence for the graves of the dead, reverence for the places of ancient and of modern worship, reverence for the church, its walls, its aisles, its services, its formalities, it will do good.

This much it may help to teach, a greater reverence for the cross as the symbol of faith. In this respect I think there are fewer at the present day than there were fifty years ago, who would not agree with me. It was a great loss to the Protestant Church when it gave up the symbol, which from the days of the Apostles had been the visible sign of the Christian belief. The loss is now greatly repaired. The use of the cross, on spires, in churches, and worn as

a jewel, in gold, or pearls, or precious stones, is not now denominational. Ships that come in from the ocean, now see from far off the cross lifted above the roofs of American cities, on churches of many denominations, but of one faith, and know thereby that these people all call themselves by the name first used at Antioch. Nor is it now supposed when a lady wears a gold or jeweled cross, that it is worn as an amulet, or with superstitious purpose, but in all places it is recognized as a simple acknowledgment of the faith once delivered to the saints. We see in churches of all kinds, on festival occasions, the cross decorated with flowers, the prominent adornment. When Christians sing such hymns as "When I survey the wondrous Cross," "Am I a Soldier of the Cross," no one imagines them idolatrous.

"But,"—I hear some hesitating reader say, a reader who with Paul glories in the cross, yet fears to overstep the line between symbolism and idolatry, "But those old Christians, Ambrose and Augustine and Jerome, were so deluded that they really believed in that wood, and revered it as the wood of the Very Cross; would you have us in this nineteenth century of light and grace, believe in such relics?"

Frankly, my good reader, if what I have written be not sufficient answer, I do not know how to reply so as to meet fully all of your mind which is in the question. But I will try.

I would encourage the preservation of localities of great events, tombs of great men, swords and personal memorials of great, patriotic soldiers. I have a broken hour-glass that I have reason to believe once measured the thunderous utterances of Luther, and the mellifluous accents of Melancthon, in the pulpit of the old church at Wittemberg, and I prize it very highly. Curiously enough, in this age of relic-despisers, I have never seen any one who was not very much interested in looking at such relics as this. In my travels in Holy Land, I have gathered and preserved many flowers which grew in soil that may have been the dust trodden by the holy feet that were afterward pierced on the cross. Curiously enough, in this time of relic-despisers, I have never found man or woman to whom I gave one of those faded flowers who did not treasure it.

There are some very aged olive trees in the Garden of Gethsemane. Many persons believe they are more than eighteen hundred years old. I do not; but I think they have seen many centuries of the storms

that have passed over Jerusalem. They do not bear many olives, and the small yield of oil, pressed carefully by the old Franciscan guardians, is very precious. I have a little of that oil, poured into the vial which holds it, by the good old Fra Luigi, in the little hut in the corner of the garden, well-nigh exhausting, as he did it, the last drop remaining of that year's yield. I like to look at that golden oil, and no other of all the olives or palms of the world so interests me.

I know a man to whom, as to you and to me, it has come to lay in the dust the beloved dead; and to him it is an ever holy and pleasant memory that those heads lie pillowed on fragrant herbs that he gathered in the garden of the agony.

Now I can not, and will not undertake to explain why this is. But I will, by your leave, ask you, my reader, a question.

If you possessed a clearly verified fragment of that wood which, in the fourth century, Helena found under the rocky base of Calvary, that wood on which millions of men, and women, and children gazed, through penitential tears, in the long ages, which the Persian carried away captive, and the Roman emperor brought back on his own shoulder, around which the

tide of war surged, until Godfrey, victor, sword in hand, pressed his lips upon it, refusing to be crowned with gold in the city where his Master was crowned with thorns, that wood for which all Christendom poured out its blood, until the fearful day at Hattin—if you had a verified, unquestionable piece of that wood, would you burn it, to kindle your fire? And, now, one question more. If it were sure to you, without a doubt, that the red stain on the fragment was the blood of your Lord, would you think any more of the wood than of any other chip? What would you do with it?

I do not think, when we come to compare minds, that sensible, civilized men, in the old centuries or in these times, differ very much on this subject. Only in those days, millions who did not possess such fragments, felt toward the wood enshrined in Jerusalem, or captive among the Saracens, just that emotion that you would feel, if you held in your hand the wood, stained with that blood, one drop of which were enough for the salvation of a universe.

When the twilight—the soft twilight of Rome, whose sad splendor seems the most fitting robe of the old city—when that twilight makes the arches of

the Basilica more lofty and distant, stretching upward in the gloom until their dim tracery seems like cloudy bars across a murky sky ; when the pillars tower away into unseen heights and the frescoes of Pinturicchio, that tell the story of Helena and the finding of the cross, fade into dimness like the history they illustrate, the traveler from this cold country of ours may see, with wondering eyes, a little group of pious women kneeling before the shrine of Santa Croce near the chapel of Helena, with bowed heads, and lips musical because they utter prayers. These are no nuns or devotees. They are sinners of poor broken-hearted Rome—that once was Rome. They have come from the market, the street, the villa, the palace. They are rich and poor together, penitent alike, and their tears make holy the pavement, as they fondly believe, with woman's proverbially trusting faith, that they kneel before that fragment which yet bears the title of the crucified Nazarene. I would not drive them away. Would you? I think not. There let them kneel, those few sad women, in the Roman twilight—alone—fitting watchers, like those who stood afar off and gazed at Calvary ; fitting watchers, in these incredulous times, around the last great fragment of the wood which a thousand years of

human faith and prayers and blood and agonies, made worthy to be loved and revered, even though it be not the wood of the tree that bore its fruit on Calvary.

**FINIS.**













